Stanley Hoffmann on Europe's Malaise

rne on Carter's Viennese Confection

Von Hoffman:
Let's Melt
Kids Into Oil

International Year of the Child 1979

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

June 30, 1979

Price One Dollar

Dick Cavett on Groucho • Erich Segal on Lowell's 'Oresteia'

No Time to Waste—*The Editors*

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TRB

from Washington
June 30, 1979

MX Blackmail

I thought Carter's speech to Congress on SALT II was one of the best he has ever made, all except for one thing—the blackmail he has agreed to pay the hawks to try to get the treaty ratified: the $30-billion MX mobile intercontinental ballistic missile. This is a monster.

Things have been happening with extraordinary speed here. Historians will look back in wonder, trying to catch the mood. President Carter was in Vienna, then in Washington, now he is in Tokyo, soon he will be in Korea and then Hawaii. He will reenter the United States just about the time Skylab reenters the earth's atmosphere, and four days before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee starts hearings on SALT II (July 9). Meanwhile Americans have inched on gasoline lines, cursing Carter and oil companies. Inflation is the worst in history. There is, in short, a sullen, sour, confused mood as America changes lifestyles. (Americans burn 30 barrels of oil per capita a year; the Japanese 16.)

The story on the mobile MX is simple. It began 190 years ago with the Founding Fathers. They wrote the two-thirds Senate ratification treaty requirement into the Constitution and the world now looks on in incredulity as Carter pays the price. What understandings, reservations and/or amendments must be affixed to SALT II to get the necessary 67 Senate "Ayes"? Brezhnev grimly warned at Vienna that any change in the treaty may produce "grave and even dangerous consequences." What does that mean?

President Carter sought to circumvent hawks by giving them the MX supermissile in advance: it will be land-based, in trenches, and the Russians won't be able to knock it out because they will never know precisely where it is. It is straight out of science fiction.

Let's say the treaty has passed, with or without amendments, and that the MX missile complex is authorized. There will be 200 of these astonishing weapons, each packing the explosive power of enough TNT to fill a train of freight cars a hundred or so miles long. Each missile will be placed on a movable launcher pulled over a 20-mile underground track. That's 4000 miles, equivalent to a railway from coast to coast. The trench area will be about a twentieth of a mile wide; the trench will be "hardened," that is, concrete reinforced, or at least that's how it's visualized. The original conception is that it will cost $30 billion but every reasonable expectation is that it will cost more; some say twice that or thrice that. Under one version there will be 4000 identical underground silos from which the awful weapon can pop out like a demon from hell. That ought to satisfy even the most anxious militants.

That isn't all, though. It wouldn't do to put the 20-mile MX subway lines close enough together for a Russian ICBM to knock out several at a time. No, they should be a mile apart, perhaps in parallel. That will take up a lot of room. One environmental estimate is that it will take 3000 to 4000 square miles. For comparison, Connecticut is 5000 square miles.

Nobody has got this far yet in locating the MX complex, but I suggest one of two ways to handle it. There's a spot where four states meet in the West—Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico. I suggest we locate it there and conscript 1000 square miles from each state. Owners could still graze cattle or raise cactus between the rows. Maybe they could make a 51st state of it and send two senators to Washington. The other way would be to allocate the MX weapons areas around the country with fitting awards to those states whose senators voted for the idea. The present owners wouldn't mind leaving if they were tactfully reminded that the site of the new super-weapons would probably be the first target of Russia in nuclear war.

As I said at the start, I thought President Carter's speech last week, two hours after arriving from Vienna, was one of the best he's made. Millions of Americans analyzed him in almost clinical detail as he appeared on TV, this elected magistrate who, under our system, takes the credit for good weather and the blame for bad. Lines are deeper, hair grayer, eyes older than two years ago; he does not use dramatic pauses or other oratorical tricks; there are no gestures, though his body gives a kind of jerky vibration at the lectern and his voice is strong and earnest. It is an impressive earnestness. He talked of the "twilight peace" that the nuclear bomb has brought—two world wars before Hiroshima, no major war in the 34 years since. SALT II, he said, "is the most detailed, far-reaching, comprehensive treaty in the history of arms control." He painted the consequences of rejection; he did not over-sell the treaty; he said that it is the negotiation process that is important as well as the new provisions; it is not "a favor we are doing for the Soviet Union. It is a deliberate, calculated move we are making as a matter of self-interest. . . ." Only half the skeptical Senate was on hand in the joint session and there were only five interruptions for applause, all at promises to maintain American strength. Who can guess the result?

This is the process that has gone on under three presidents for seven years, as diplomacy constantly lagged behind technology. What will Kissinger do, Nixon do? What will Senate Minority Leader Baker do, who helped pass the Panama treaty, but who wants to be president and is now politically torn? The indicated escape route is through reservations and amendments.

There was only one reference to the MX in Carter's speech. He argued ambiguously that its "verifiable mobile deployment system will enhance stability" by curtailing Russia's chance of "a successful first strike." I think Carter has paid too high a ransom for the treaty. The Arms Control Association, one of whose directors is Herbert Scoville Jr., former senior official of the CIA and leading expert on electronics intelligence-gathering, urges treaty ratification. But it says the MX will undercut the treaty benefits. It doesn't go into the geography of the thing as I have. It just says that if we build it the Russians will, too, as they have followed us in the past. "No system of verification for mobile ICBMs has yet been devised that would clearly be acceptable to both sides," says ACA. It is counterproductive, self-defeating. Once more technology bounds ahead even as diplomacy takes a tentative step toward peace.

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Correspondence

Gay riots

To the editors:

I find it impossible to share Paul Robinson's expressed sense of "celebration" at the May 21 gay riots following the Dan White verdict ("Gays in the Streets," *TNR*, June 9). The extensive damage to public property and public servants cannot be justified, no matter how tortured the logic.

The show of civil disobedience here may have been "moving" to Mr. Robinson. In my view, it set back the efforts of gays to achieve greater acceptance. In a city known and loved for its tolerance, the gays took an intolerable step in the wrong direction. It was an unfortunate experience.

Lawrence Lee Thomas
San Francisco, California

To the editors:

Paul Robinson revealed a high sense of moral responsibility when he called the mayhem following the Dan White verdict "a cause for celebration." Destruction of private and public property and a brick in the face of Supervisor Carol Ruth Silver, probably the strongest ally of the gay community outside their own ranks, is certainly a reason to break out the bubbly.

The reason White received such an egregiously minimal sentence for murdering Milk and former mayor George Moscone had more to do with a histrionic defense, a sloppy prosecution and the psychiatric testimony of Martin Blinder. Blinder, a psychiatrist, contended in the so-called twinkie defense that White was overwrought from an excessive consumption of junk food. Such testimony easily deserves the label of lunacy. However, when the gays took to the streets, homosexual supervisor Harry Britt nearly eclipsed Blinder for sheer idiocy when he yelled out at the rioters, "You're acting like heterosexuals." Robinson, Blinder and Britt seem to me to be afflicted with what got Dan White leniency—diminished capacity.

Michael Krasny
San Francisco State University
San Francisco, California

Political opinion in Moscow

To the editors:

The pseudonymous "Robert Herr" ("Spengler in Moscow," *TNR*, March 31) wants to persuade us that virtually all Russians believe in "the impending destruction of the West," and that the United States soon "will be destroyed" by Soviet military power. Herr claims that "Americans living in Moscow have been hearing [this] same message" from ordinary Russians and intellectuals alike.

Almost everything in Herr's article rings false or misleading to an American who has lived in Moscow for extended periods in recent years. Much of it suggests that Herr is unfamiliar with the complex realities of the Soviet Union. For the plain fact is that political opinion among Muscovites today is extraordinarily diverse. A foreigner living there can hear virtually every kind of political view, sensible and nonsensical, from the far right to the far left. That Herr has managed to hear only one quite nonsensical viewpoint during his stay is his own problem.

But there is something profoundly alarming and apparently fraudulent in his article, which has no clear purpose other than to turn the reader against SALT II and the whole idea of detente. The centerpiece of the article is a talk with Roy Medvedev, the Moscow dissident whom Herr cites because Medvedev is well known and respected in the United States. According to Herr, Medvedev told him, among other things in the same vein, "Americans are fools." "Americans cannot keep up with this [Soviet] kind of system." "We will take over."

Not only is all of this contradicted by Medvedev's many published writings, but on April 29, 1979, speaking by phone with his brother Zhores in London, Roy Medvedev flatly denied the views attributed to him by Herr. According to Roy Medvedev, Herr "turned the essence and meaning of my remarks upside down." Medvedev went on to reiterate his real view that SALT and detente are "absolutely necessary and in the interests of both sides."

Stephen F. Cohen
Director, Program in Russian Studies
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

"Robert Herr" replies:

I was saddened to read Professor Cohen's remarks in reply to my article, for they come from a man whose writings on Soviet history I have long admired. As Professor Cohen himself must have observed in his trips to the Soviet Union, life in Moscow can be totally divorced from political debates back home in Washington. When I wrote the article in mid-February, the main issue on people's minds was China's attack on Vietnam; SALT lingered off on the horizon. Shortly after my article appeared, however, President Carter's announcement of his acceptance of SALT II touched off a major debate over Soviet-American relations. My article has received praise from opponents of SALT; now Professor Cohen, a friend of the treaty, accuses me of attempting to undermine the agreement. I had no intention whatsoever of commenting on SALT and I regret to find people reading their own political biases into my article.

My purpose in writing "Spengler in Moscow" was to convey an attitude that I have heard expressed frequently in Moscow. I have lived in Russia before this year, in the bright days for detente of the early 1970s. The optimism among Russians of the Kissinger years contrasts sharply with the grim mood of today. It was alarming this year to hear of Reaganesque comments on America's health from ordinary Russians, but when I heard somewhat similar remarks from a man of Medvedev's stature I felt moved to write.

Professor Cohen questions the accuracy of my article on two grounds. First, he accuses me of inaccurately repeating Medvedev's statements. Whether Medvedev actually read my article is unknown. What he confirmed by telephone to his brother in London is that SALT and detente "are absolutely necessary and in the interests of both sides." Since I never thought, nor wrote, that Medvedev opposed detente, I do not see how I have twisted his remarks.

Secondly, Professor Cohen accuses me of seizing upon a one-sided, "quite nonsensical viewpoint." That a professor of Soviet history would find my opinion nonsensical is surprising indeed. Any reader of *TNR* over the last six months would recognize the word "feudalism" in descriptions of the American political system. Russians aren't the only people to criticize American democracy for its dependence on interest groups, for the absence of unified leadership and for our inability to agree on common objectives. By contrast, anyone familiar with Soviet politics would acknowledge the tremendous priority given to military preparedness in that country—not simply in terms of budgetary allocation but also in terms of group organization and mobilization.

Does Professor Cohen think it "non-

(continued on page 41)

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AMERICAN INCOME LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY of INDIANA

Serving America's Union Families

Comparative Financial Review

	Years ended December 31, 1978	1977
Total Income	$ 65,137,912	$ 52,823,191
Benefits and expenses	54,870,616	46,046,539
Income before income taxes and realized investment gains (losses)	10,267,296	6,776,652
Provision for income taxes		
Current	---	---
Deferred	2,792,809	1,909,150
Income before realized investment gains (losses)	7,474,487	4,867,502
Realized investment gains (losses)	(120,433)	11,364
Net income	7,354,054	4,878,866
Earnings per share		
Income before realized investment gains (losses)	4.35	2.88
Realized investment gains (losses)	(.07)	.01
Net income	4.28	2.89
Assets	$ 144,993,410	$ 116,651,027
Insurance in Force	$1,504,894,000	$1,289,000,000

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Cover: "Il Salvataggio dei Naufraghi" by Théodore Gericault, private collection. Article on page 5.

Above the banner: the official emblem for the International Year of the Child. According to the US National Commission on the International Year of the Child, "The designer is Erik Jerichan of Denmark, who intended to convey the warmth of the child reaching for the parent and the parent embracing the child." Nicholas von Hoffman writes on kiddy power, page 19.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

June 30, 1979

Emergency

One would think that the experience of Hitler and the Holocaust would have innoculated the world against genocide, at least for the rest of this century. One would think that no national leader or regime, for as long as the memory of Nazi Germany's crimes remains vivid, would want to repeat its acts and share its odious place in history. One would think, for sure, that the civilized world would rise up in outrage to halt would-be perpetrators of genocide, or at least act concertedly to save the victims. If tyrants are beyond shame, surely the rest of the world must not wish to repeat its indifference of the 1930s and 1940s.

But of course one would be wrong to harbor such optimistic thoughts. Genocide is being perpetrated today in Indochina. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which so lately laid claim to and won much of the world's moral support, is systematically destroying its ethnic Chinese population. Vietnam is not even concealing its racist intent; on the contrary, it is treading specifically in Hitler's footsteps, even adopting some of his devices. So Vietnam is confronting the world with an unmistakable challenge: this time can we do better for suffering Asians than we did for suffering Jews? Arguably, we are doing a bit better. We are not stonily turning our backs and averting our eyes. But neither are we responding to this enormous new crime with the generosity and speed that it demands. Vietnam's fellow communist countries, those supposed proponents of the brotherhood of man, are either doing nothing or acting as apologists for genocide. Europe, the non-aligned world (except Vietnam's neighbors), Japan, Latin America, the United States—none of us is doing enough. And President Carter, in the face of one of the greatest human rights disasters of recent history, is failing to provide moral and political leadership in keeping with the professed ideals of his administration.

It is not at all an exaggeration to compare Vietnam's actions with Hitler's. In what amounts to an Asian recodification of the Nuremberg laws, Vietnam is victimizing its citizens, even former military officers and security officials, if they have so much as one Chinese grandparent, or if they are married to a Chinese and refuse divorce. Chinese are being expelled from their jobs, and their schools and businesses are being closed. They are being given a choice: either move to Vietnam's so-called New Economic Zones—which often lack food, shelter and even water—or flee by sea. In a vicious repetition of Nazi thuggery, the Vietnamese government is making its Chinese citizens "buy" their right to depart; it is expropriating their property and extorting payment in gold from relatives overseas. This trade in human life is earning Vietnam about $250 million a month—more income than the unproductive militarist dictatorship can derive from any other source. Before they are let go, refugees are required to sign statements that their departure was voluntary.

The Vietnamese have not resorted to gas chambers. The ocean is their substitute. Vietnam's really seaworthy boats have long since been used for flight. Those remaining are all but guaranteed to sink.

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Somehow, 65,000 Vietnamese refugees a month are making it to shore all around Southeast Asia, but US officials estimate that at least as many, and probably more, are drowning at sea.

Statistically speaking, what is occurring in Indochina may not be a Holocaust, but it is clearly a human catastrophe of immense proportions. About 330,000 Vietnamese refugees are now crowded into squalid camps in Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong and Indonesia. Vietnam seems intent on expelling between one million and two million more. There are believed to be about 1.5 million ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, and they comprise 70 percent of those presently fleeing or being pushed out of Vietnam. The others are "reactionaries," capitalists or other unreliable elements. And Vietnamese citizens are not the only victims of this horror. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of people who died in Cambodia under Pol Pot's brand of communism, thousands more have been killed and made homeless since Vietnam invaded last year to replace Pol Pot. There is little food left in Cambodia, and those who can do so are trying to flee to Thailand. Between 80,000 and 90,000 Cambodians have entered Thailand in the last few weeks. On top of everything, there are reports that the Vietnamese overlords who now rule Laos are systematically devastating the traditionally recalcitrant Mung (Meo) tribes, allegedly employing gas warfare. Several thousand Laotian refugees have made it to Thailand.

The refugee burden has fallen like an avalanche on the other countries of Southeast Asia. Most of the costs of feeding, clothing and housing refugees are borne by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (half the UNHCR's budget comes from the United States). But Vietnam's neighbors are all paying in terms of instability, space and costs of receiving and policing refugees. Malaysia, whose population is already a volatile mix of Malay Moslems and Chinese, is giving temporary haven to 76,000 boat people. The Malaysians are afraid these people will become permanent immigrants and that tens of thousands more will follow. Malaysia's deputy prime minister managed to briefly focus the world's attention on the refugee situation by threatening to have new arrivals shot on sight. As soon as other officials clarified Malaysia's policy, the world sighed with relief and the story moved off page one. But Malaysia does apparently intend to prevent any new boats from landing on its territory, and to force thousands of recent arrivals back out to sea. Thailand, too, feels it has reached its limit. It has just finished forcing 40,000 Khmer refugees back to face starvation or hostile armies in Cambodia, and apparently intends to expel another 40,000 promptly.

Westerners react with horror to these Malaysian and Thai decisions. But so far the West has failed to deal with the central fact: boat people are arriving on Southeast Asian beaches at the rate of 65,000 a month, but places are being found for them elsewhere in the world at the rate of only 10,000 a month. With Vietnam apparently bent on disgorging hundreds of thousands more people in coming months, the response of the world is woefully inadequate. Southeast Asian countries where refugees are landing fear they will be overwhelmed and don't want to take any more. And so unless something is done—and quickly—the prospect is that thousands of people will die by drowning.

Two sorts of action need to be taken, and President Carter—if he really aspires to be a leader in the cause of human rights—has a role to play in both of them. First, all possible pressures and inducements need to be applied to Vietnam to get it to reverse its genocidal course. The prospect of success is not very good because Vietnam seems willing to sacrifice its standing in world opinion (to the extent the world cares). After all, this policy is making money for Vietnam, some of which is being used to buy arms from the Soviet Union. Vietnam is eliminating elements of its population that might resist socialist purification or harbor fifth columnists loyal to the People's Republic of China. The policy is sowing discord and confusion among Vietnam's neighbors, and dividing them from economic and political allies in the West.

Achieving a change in Vietnamese policy also is difficult because few countries have any leverage in Vietnam, least of all the United States, Vietnam's former enemy and now (apparently) an ally of Vietnam's new enemy, China. But there are things the United States can do, and hasn't done. The one country that has real influence with Vietnam is the Soviet Union. But at the summit with Brezhnev in Vienna, President Carter apparently barely mentioned the Indochina refugee problem. The Vienna record shows that Carter did say some homey words in a toast: "We must all show compassion for the tens of thousands of suffering people who have been driven from their homelands," he said. "The callous indifference with which the world ignored refugees in the Europe of the 1930s must not be repeated in the Asia of the 1970s." But there is no indication that Carter made the Soviet Union understand that using its influence to curb Vietnam was important to good US-Soviet relations. Secretary of State Vance did quietly raise the refugee issue with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, but was rebuffed. Gromyko reportedly replied that the refugees were China's fault and the United States's. There was no attempt, in US background briefings and leak sessions in Vienna, to focus world attention on the Soviet Union's *de facto* complicity—as Vietnam's chief aid supplier—in Vietnam's policy of genocide.

Other approaches to Vietnam are possible. Several have been suggested by Senator Edward Kennedy, Congress's leading expert on refugee problems. The most ambitious is a Geneva-style all-parties conference to settle disputes between China, Cambodia, Vietnam and their neighbors and allies. There is no harm in

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trying to arrange such a meeting, but the prospect seems dim and, as Kennedy himself acknowledges, the plight of refugees is the most urgently pressing problem. Sweden, Japan and the United Nations—all of which give aid to Vietnam—should be asked to urge that country to reverse its policy or, at least, pursue it in a more orderly and humane way. From time to time Vietnam has agreed with UN officials to begin allowing ethnic Chinese to fly out of the country on a reasonable schedule, but no policy has actually been implemented. Efforts should be renewed to get these agreements fulfilled.

Given the all-too-likely prospect that no interventions will succeed in changing Vietnamese policy, the United States should take the lead in insuring that temporary and permanent resettlement sites, and financial aid, are found for the refugees. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Senator Kennedy have proposed that an international conference be called to seek pledges of homes and money. The Carter administration apparently is getting ready to appeal late this month for a special session of the United Nations Security Council to be held in July—when the Soviet Union no longer is president of the council—to plan for such a conference.

A conference may be useful, but it is important to remember that similar conferences were held in the 1930s and 1940s, at Evian, France, and in Bermuda, but resulted in no substantial help for the Jews. The United States, working through its allies, needs to insure that, conference or no conference, the civilized nations of the world provide homes for Asia's refugees. A special effort must be made at the upcoming economic summit meeting in Tokyo, where the heads of the world's richest nations will gather. A major US objective at the meeting should be a clear declaration to countries like Malaysia and Thailand that the industrial powers mean to relieve them of their refugee burden and that, therefore, they need not fear giving temporary asylum to the homeless. The big powers should pledge themselves to be responsible for specific large numbers of refugees—either to give them homes in our own countries or find them homes elsewhere.

A special effort should be made to induce Japan to bear its fair share of responsibility. As an Asian power, and a country that has grown strong and rich while spending little on defense or foreign aid, Japan ought to be pressed to take on a major chunk of the cost of setting up and maintaining temporary resettlement centers in Asia. So far, Japan has pledged to take only 500 Vietnamese refugees. Granted, Japan is a crowded country. But it can do better than that. It can spend money, and it can exert its influence on other nations to absorb refugees.

There is not a lot of empty space left in the world anymore, and so it is not going to be easy to find homes for a million or more Vietnamese. But some countries, such as Brazil, do have room and so far have taken practically no refugees at all. There are some other underpopulated prospects, including Saudi Arabia, Surinam and French Guyana in South America, the Anglo-French New Hebrides and independent New Caledonia off Australia, and the US islands of Guam, Wake and Midway. But realistically, most of the refugees will have to be absorbed by the countries that have been taking them already: the United States, Australia, Canada, France and West Germany.

It is President Carter's special responsibility—but one he has not been fulfilling—to establish it as a moral responsibility in the United States to increase our intake of refugees. It is true that the United States has accepted a far greater proportion than any other country: about 200,000 already, and lately 7000 out of the 10,000 a month being resettled around the world. Yet the US performance is inadequate to the need, and President Carter is not challenging either the country or Congress to meet it. If ever there was an opportunity for this moral crusader to lead a worthy crusade, this is it. Yet the administration only last week began holding high-level White House meetings to plan long-term refugee strategies. President Carter had an opportunity to galvanize Congress and the country to action on the refugee issue when he addressed a joint session of Congress about SALT, but he let it pass.

President Carter should decide immediately to triple US refugee intake from 7000 to 21,000 a month. He should use this decision as a prod to obtain similar action from other countries at the Tokyo summit. Even if the whole world agrees to triple its intake, refugees will be permanently resettled at only a third the rate at which they are arriving out of Vietnam. Still, this pledge, and the prospect that new temporary resettlement sites will be built and paid for, will ease pressure on Southeast Asian nations which receive boat people first, and help these nations resist the temptation to push the boat people back out to sea.

A tripling of US refugee intake means that the United States would absorb about 250,000 Vietnamese a year. If Vietnam really is going to dump 1.5 million people into the sea, the United States probably is going to have to accept half of them. This would be a larger undertaking than our absorption of 600,000 Cubans following Castro's takeover, but not much larger. The Vietnamese we have taken in so far since Saigon's fall have proved to be industrious and valuable additions to our society, despite language barriers and the chaotic, psychologically battering manner in which they arrived.

Far from being a burden on American society, Vietnamese refugees so far have been a net boon, economically speaking. US Department of Labor studies showed that in late 1978, 63.4 percent of all refugees were in the labor force, compared to 63.6 for all Americans. Of those, 94.9 percent were actually employed, compared to 84.5 percent for Americans.

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Another study showed that even among Vietnamese adults who could not understand English, 89 percent still found jobs. The refugees have started out mainly doing low-paid work, but they are coming up fast. In 1975, when the refugees began arriving, only 15 percent of the households had incomes of $800 a month; now, 70 percent do so. The refugees do need help when they arrive, but all indications are they will pay back what they take. Actually, they will make our country richer—culturally richer, and richer in pride.

As it happens, there is little political opposition in the United States to providing a haven for Vietnamese refugees. Organized labor, which tends to urge clampdowns on illegal immigration, actually supports increases in aid for the Vietnamese. The main opposition in Congress tends to be budgetary. In a period of fiscal austerity, Congress has been slow to approve a $400,000 request for money to resettle 7000 refugees a month. A $1.2 billion appropriation theoretically would move three times as slowly, or not at all. But the missing factor has been presidential leadership. President Carter has not made an appeal to the country on moral grounds on this issue. If he does, we cannout doubt that Americans will respond. If he does not, and we do not, a terrible tragedy is likely to take place. Years from now as we look back on it—as today we look back on the 1930s—we will be ashamed.

The Human Comedy

Thoughtful thought of the week, from the June 19 *Wall Street Journal*:

> "Inflation is a product of—and can only be cured by—the people," says A. Robert Abboud, the thoughtful chairman of the First National Bank of Chicago.

Runner-up, from a dispatch from Britain by Joseph Sisco in the June 20 *New York Times:*

> Doubt and hope prevail. Pain must come before the cure, if at all.

A press release from *Dental Lab World*, "The Voice of Dental Technology" (contributed by Michelle Slung, Washington, DC):

> The United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission has discussed a recall and replacement of all uraniated porcelain teeth and crowns, as well as a nationwide "moratorium" on future sales, due to what it terms a "chance of cancer induction," according to a copyrighted report by D.L. Thompson of the Food and Drug Administration published in *Dental Lab World*, the international professional trade magazine for dental technology.
>
> Both ideas have been shelved, *Dental Lab World* reported in its June issue, the recall and replacement program because NRC feels it would "generate anxiety among denture and crown wearers grossly out of proportion to whatever risk exists," and because the enormity of a project to replace 10 million porcelain dentures and bridges and 25 million porcelain crowns. The moratorium concept is no longer under active consideration because of the economic impact—one manufacturer alone has 100 million artificial porcelain teeth in storage at warehouses and dental laboratories throughout the United States, representing a potential loss in the "tens of millions of dollars."

White House Watch

Vienna Tales

President Carter flew from Vienna to Washington after the signing of the second strategic arms limitation treaty and after his first meetings with his Soviet counterpart, Leonid Brezhnev, in a state of mingled irritation and confidence. He was irritated by the US and world media's preoccupation with the abundant signs in Vienna that Brezhnev is sick and faltering. Carter, I was told, granted that the media reports were legitimate and accurate, allowing for the usual variations in what different observers (and different cameras) saw. Nonetheless he thought the preoccupation irrelevant and, beyond all else, cruel—cruel to Brezhnev and a cruel distraction from the main fact that Brezhnev in his personal and national fashion was working hard and taking risks for the same world peace and the same peaceful US-Soviet relationship that Carter was working and taking risks for. Carter was said to be confident that the summit meeting with Brezhnev had been a good occasion, that he had done well at it, and that it had contributed to eventual Senate ratification of the SALT II treaty.

Reporters in the Carter press party, following him home in a crowded 747 (chartered at their employers' expense), didn't see and hear Carter in his address to Congress that night. The speech text and the testimony of people who heard and saw him, including our TRB, indicate that it was one of the President's best performances and that with it he accomplished what I was told in Vienna he intended to accomplish. The intention was to persuade the public that the country

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and the world will be better off and more secure with this treaty than without it. It follows that senators who threaten to deny Carter the necessary two-thirds vote for ratification would be disserving their country, the world and their constituents. The summit meeting and Carter's personal decision—over emphatic White House staff and other advisory opposition—to risk imitating Richard Nixon's helicopter jump from Andrews Air Force Base to the Capitol after the 1972 Moscow summit, and go straight to Congress on the night of his return from Vienna, were attempts to shove Congress back into its proper place in the formulation of foreign policy and reassert the constitutional predominance of the President.

Now to a few stories of how it was in Vienna for the horde of journalists (in tolerant old age, I include the electronic people) in Carter's press party. There were three channels of communication. On Saturday and Sunday evenings, following four of the five plenary meetings between Carter, Brezhnev and their senior gophers, who were said to remain judiciously quiet most of the time, Press Secretary Jody Powell and his Soviet equivalent, Leonid Zamyatin, briefed together in the huge hall at the Hofburg Palace where worldwide TV showed Carter and Brezhnev signing the treaty on Monday. Powell arranged background (unattributable by name) briefings for the White House press party and, toward the end, an odd assortment of additional invitees including the chief correspondent of Hsinhua, the mainland Chinese official news agency. The Hsinhua man's pen wiggled frantically on his note pad whenever the US-Soviet-Chinese triangle was mentioned, which was seldom. There also were private contacts with presumably knowing American staffers and ministers. In this reporter's case the private contacts were few, partly because of an impression accrued over many years that on these summit occasions there is little to be added to the public scene, and what is added is likely to be misleading. An account of a complicated example of the latter follows.

On the President's Air Force One, flying from Washington to Vienna, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance told the few reporters who are allotted seats on these flights that the SALT issue raised by the Soviet Tupolev-22 or "Backfire" bomber would be handled apart from the treaty text in letters from Brezhnev to Carter and from Carter to Brezhnev. The question is whether this bomber does or does not have the capacity to dump nuclear bombs on the US. It's a phony issue, largely fomented by military and civilian opponents of any limitation on strategic arms that the Soviets could possibly accept. The intent to deal with Backfire outside SALT II proper, with an exchange of letters, was known weeks before the Vienna summit. Vance's way of restating the intention prompted a reporter to ask whether the US and the USSR had "agreed to disagree." Vance said, no. But the seeds of wonder had been planted.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's assistant for national security affairs, is discernibly and rather pathetically driven by a wish to be perceived and remembered as the assistant who out-Kissingered Henry Kissinger in his worthier endeavors. Brzezinski lunched in Vienna with several *New York Times* correspondents. (For summits, the *Times* tends to have at least four or five correspondents present and battling each other for assignments and newspaper space.) One of the *Times* correspondents, Hedrick Smith, reported in the Sunday, June 17th *Times* that the proffered Brezhnev Backfire letter to Carter was "vague" and that "it does not give the explicit assurances on its [Backfire] production and deployment that Washington once sought." A reputable correspondent told me that Smith had told him that this extremely minus account of the Backfire assurances, which the administration at that point had settled for, originated at the Brzezinski lunch. Reporters don't ask other reporters who their sources are and I didn't ask Smith. A Brzezinski assistant said he was at the Vienna lunch with the *Times* reporters and didn't recall the Backfire matter being discussed. That is a sad and not very credible commentary on *Times* reporters, even if they are at what the Brzezinski assistant called "a social lunch." At presidential summits, there are no "social lunches" between the Brzezinskis of this world and reporters who are worth their prodigious expense allowances.

On the concluding Monday in Vienna, after the treaty was signed, Powell and Ambassador Ralph Earle, the chief US negotiator at Geneva, appeared at an on-record press conference. Backfire came up. Powell recalled that an unnameable American briefer had previously said there were no remaining problems with Backfire. Powell added, *"He was wrong."* Knowing about the Brzezinski lunch with the *Times* people and the *Times* Backfire story, I thought Powell was referring to Brzezinski and intimating that both Powell and Carter were irritated with Brzezinski. I was wrong. Powell actually was referring to himself. I was told that on Monday afternoon he didn't know about the Smith story or the *Times*-Brzezinski lunch. According to Powell at the public Monday briefing, Carter and others concluded that the Backfire assurance offered by Brezhnev during the pre-Vienna preliminaries was insufficient. Presumably with Senate critics of SALT II in mind, Carter decided he had to have something more. He settled for Brezhnev's quoted statement in a document issued by the US alone, not signed by Brezhnev, that the Backfire is a medium-range bomber which will never be converted to an intercontinental-range bomber. With it was an American, not a Russian, assertion that, presumably at one of the Vienna meetings, "President Brezhnev confirmed that the Soviet production rate would not exceed 30 per year."

I've already said the Backfire issue is a phony, cooked up by military and civilian critics of SALT II or, when

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you get to the gut of it, critics of *any* US-Soviet agreement that restrains the US production and deployment of nuclear armaments. Yet this Backfire business is troubling. Before Vienna, the big argument was over Backfire range—could it or couldn't it be fueled or refueled in transit to permit nuclear bombing of the continental US? Now, we are told, the big argument was over the annual production rate. Our government is happy to be able to say, without making Brezhnev say, that it has Brezhnev's assurance that no more than 30 Backfires will be produced each year. There's something smelly here and one may be sure that SALT II's Senate critics have smelled it.

The texts of toasts that Carter and Brezhnev gave at "working dinners" on Saturday night at the American Embassy and on Sunday night at the Soviet Embassy were prepared in Washington and Moscow and were exchanged between the two governments before Carter and Brezhnev reached Vienna. Journalists nevertheless assumed that they reflected the mood and exchanges at the plenary meetings. A slight but significant difference between the text of Carter's Sunday night toast as it was handed out to the media in advance of the dinner and as he delivered it seemed to validate this impression. The first paragraph of the advance Sunday text had Carter saying he and Brezhnev had moved toward agreement "on some of the issues, particularly in the arms control field," but "on some other issues we did not agree and we were not able to develop a common approach." He actually said: "On some other issues, *particularly international problems in troubled areas of the world*, we did not *always* agree." The added languaged, italicized here, had also been prepared in Washington and withheld from the text issued in advance because a State Department adviser felt that Carter really shouldn't go so far in characterizing discussions before the discussions occurred.

A passage in Brezhnev's toast that night made world-wide headlines and dominated television and radio reports on the assumption that it, too, reflected the Vienna talks. Brezhnev said the treaty "is a compromise, for it could not be otherwise. Each side would like some parts of the text of the treaty to be somewhat different, more suitable to it. . . . Any attempt to rock this elaborate structure which it has been so hard to build, to substitute any of its elements, to pull it closer to one's own self would be an unprofitable exercise. The entire structure might then collapse, entailing grave and even dangerous consequences. . . ." This was rightly understood to be a warning to the US Senate to leave SALT II alone. Some journalists in Carter's press party thought it a mistake, more likely to get Senate backs up than to deter votes to reject or amend the treaty. Vance, Carter and presumably other senior US officials in Vienna were glad that Brezhnev said in public what Foreign Secretary Andrei Gromyko and Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin had been saying in private for months.

Carter's reference to "troubled areas of the world," and his explicit statements in Vienna and to Congress that he had warned Brezhnev that continued Soviet and Cuban intervention in Africa and Asia could only worsen US-Soviet relations, demonstrated an interesting difference between his accounts and his spokesmen's accounts of the Vienna talks. The briefers avoided any references to specific problems, problem areas and US demands whenever possible. They made the exercise seem so bland, so cozy, that some reporters aggravated Jody Powell by expressing doubts that anything whatever had been accomplished in Vienna.

At the aforementioned Monday briefing Ralph Earle did a brilliant job of maintaining that the precise language of the treaty and the even more precise definitions in the "agreed understandings" of what was and was not meant in every important passage of the treaty itself should convince any reasonable critic that the treaty is acceptable. On another occasion he was asked whether he really thought that he could convince Paul Nitze, his friend and sponsor and probably the most effective unofficial critic of the treaty, that it is acceptable. Earle answered that, yes, given a chance to go through all the detail with Nitze, he believed that he could bring Nitze around. Earle and Nitze are serious people, long and well known to each other. Earle's answer to the question was the most interesting thing I heard said in Vienna.

John Osborne

On the Hill

Welfare Reform, Take Two

It's easy to find fault with the Carter administration's latest welfare reform proposal. Last year's version, a $20-billion "comprehensive" plan, didn't come close to passing either the House or the Senate. So this year, older and presumably wiser, the administration lowered its sights and tailored its proposal to meet the objections of key members of Congress. The result is a scaled-down, $5.7-billion package which the president sent to Congress on May 23. The new plan leaves the current welfare system basically intact. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a man with strong views about welfare, said, "By this act the president abandons the goal of welfare reform, which is to change the system."

But Moynihan is not given to understatement, and despite his complaint, the Carter plan retains many of

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the most important features of welfare reform. For the first time, it would establish a national minimum benefit—$4654 for a family of four—so that no state could keep payments at the low levels still prevalent in the South. Liberal critics point out that most states already pay more than this amount, which means that many poor families would receive not an additional cent under the Carter plan. Nevertheless, the plan would increase the benefits of 800,000 poor families in 13 southern and western states. This may not seem like an important reform to a senator from deficit-ridden New York, but it could be crucial to a poor child in Mississippi.

Carter's plan also would extend welfare coverage to two-parent families with children. Under the current regulations 24 states deny all welfare payments to poor families with both a father and mother present. If the father deserts his family, the mother and children then can collect. For years all observers of the welfare system have deplored this government encouragement of broken homes. Yet it will persist if the current reform effort fails.

The new Carter proposal also calls for $900 million in fiscal relief to the states, including $145 million to New York State, about 40 percent of which would be passed on to New York City. It would create 400,000 new public service jobs, while increasing the tax break to employers who hire those on welfare. And it would increase the earned income tax credit for those at or just above the poverty line, the so-called "working poor." This tax credit is a pet program of Russell Long who, not coincidentally, chairs the Senate Finance Committee, which considers welfare legislation.

Last year's comprehensive plan would have eliminated food stamps and given recipients the cash value of the stamps instead. But the food stamp program proved to have strong support in Congress. This year's plan would substitute cash for stamps only for the low-income aged, the blind and the disabled. Eliminating the stamps would streamline the welfare system, but it wouldn't necessarily aid the poor. Studies now show that the food stamp program has reduced hunger and malnutrition among low-income adults and their children (see "Feeding the Hungry," *TNR*, November 25). The existence of food stamps may offend the aesthetic sensibilities of reformers who would prefer to give one cash payment instead of cash and stamps, but food stamps seems to be one Great Society program that has worked.

Still, the new Carter plan is low-budget reform. The $4654 minimum is only two-thirds of the government's official poverty line; it won't help the nation's poor families keep pace with inflation. Last year's plan included one million public service jobs, while this year's model offers only 400,000. And last year's plan extended the guaranteed minimum income to all couples, whether or not they had children living at home. The new plan might encourage some poor couples to have more children so they can continue to qualify for benefits—an outcome no one wants.

These are serious limitations, and in other times they might justify opposition to the entire plan. But with budget-cutting fever running rampant in Congress, a more generous plan would not pass. Even a plan as modest as this one may not make it, despite the endorsements of several members of Congress who sponsored alternative plans last year: Al Ullman of Oregon, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee; James C. Corman of California, chairman of the Public Assistance Subcommittee of Ways and Means; Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee; and Senator Henry Bellmon of Oklahoma. Welfare reform proposals have been introduced unsuccessfully twice in the last decade—by Nixon in 1969 and by Carter in 1978—and if the current Carter plan doesn't pass, it could be years before anyone tries again. Moynihan knows this; in spite of his reservations he agreed to sponsor and support the bill in the Senate.

When liberals confront a plan like Carter's, they tend to reject it summarily as too limited. In addition, there's a school of leftist thought which holds that any welfare reform is counterproductive because it pacifies the poor, thus removing the pressure for greater social change. This, however, is a difficult argument to make to a poor southern family whose members need more money for food and clothing. In fact, failure to pass the Carter plan would play into the hands of conservatives, who then could campaign for their kind of "reform": tightening the rules to get those welfare "chiselers" off the rolls. The Carter plan isn't perfect; it isn't even close to perfect, but it's the best hope for reform in the foreseeable future. Those to the left of Howard Jarvis who hesitate to support it should consider the alternative: no reform at all.

Andrew Cherlin

Andrew Cherlin is an assistant professor of social relations at the Johns Hopkins University.

The US interferes abroad,
but it fears to intervene.

Words For Somoza

President Carter's human rights crusade has achieved some favorable results in the Soviet Union, Indonesia, Haiti and South Korea. But it is producing a moral and political disaster in Nicaragua. We are not entirely responsible for the civil war there, but we helped set it

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in motion. Now the Carter administration does not seem to know how to end it. US national interests probably will suffer no matter how it ends itself.

It seemed so right and easy in the beginning. Of all the world's despots, Anastasio Somoza surely is one of the most despicable, a man who is even willing to steal earthquake relief funds from his people. As the incumbent in a dynasty installed and supported for 40 years by the United States, Somoza was a ripe candidate for vigorous human rights treatment. He got it, and the nation exploded. The problem for the US is, now what?

We are not solely responsible for the volcano's eruption. Obviously Somoza himself is the chief culprit. His greediness and cruelty laid a groundwork of enmity toward his regime. The opposition was inspired by a newly activist Roman Catholic church. But according to Mauricio Solaun, who recently resigned as US ambassador to Nicaragua, in 1977 the opposition was "fragmented and disorganized . . . mesmerized by Somoza." The country had been under a state of siege for almost three years; the press was censored and political participation was restricted. The Sandinista revolutionary movement had been ruthlessly decimated by Somoza's National Guard.

Pursuing US *human rights* policy, American officials were critical of Somoza both privately and in public and clearly favored changes in the regime. But *politically*, US policy was "neutral" between Somoza and his opposition. The United States was not in favor of toppling the regime, and it wasn't for continuing to prop it up. The human rights policy achieved some results. Somoza lifted the state of siege, relaxed political restrictions and stopped censorship. But, as Ambassador Solaun observes in retrospect, "partial democratization is always a risky enterprise." Solaun, a Latin American scholar, is returning to his professorship at the University of Illinois after two years as ambassador.

Solaun says he tried to make it clear to Nicaraguans that the United States wanted change, but not revolution. But "I am not clear how well my message was understood." Somoza and his friends accused the US of trying to undermine him. The opposition was alternately deluded that the US was doing just that and enraged when the US granted loans to the Somoza regime or complimented Somoza on his tepid reforms. US human rights intervention clearly energized Nicaraguan politics, but two internal events set it to flame. Somoza's heart attack and incapacitation through late 1977, Solaun notes, undermined the director's image of invulnerability. The assassination of oppositionist editor Pedro Joaquin Chamorro threw Nicaragua into full-scale revolt, with virtually all segments of the country except the military arrayed against Somoza.

As Somoza's National Guard ruthlessly suppressed the revolt, killing about 2000 people in the process, the US maintained its policy of political neutrality. Washington would not even extend itself to try to mediate the conflict until September 1978. At long last the US did urge Somoza to allow a plebescite in the country, but he refused. And why shouldn't he refuse? The US had shown that the worst it would do to him was cut off military and economic aid and call him a naughty man. The US would not even openly declare itself in favor of Somoza's departure, much less intervene overtly or covertly to topple him. In Nicaragua, much of the opposition even now thinks the US is secretly backing Somoza.

Looking back on the history of idealistic US crusades for democratization, former ambassador Solaun says that the key distinguishing feature of the Carter era—as opposed to Wilson's, Roosevelt's or Kennedy's—is a reluctance to intervene. The US will not use force on behalf of human rights. It will not use coercion. We are, in Solaun's words, "inducers rather than implementers" of change. We encourage libertarian revolt, but we are not willing, when it starts, to see that it succeeds. We will not intervene in other countries' internal affairs; we will only interfere.

According to Solaun, US human rights policy "has brought a breath of fresh air to several authoritarian polities. Surely there has been a heightening of international sensitivities to human rights observance. For instance, in several Latin American countries, human rights questions have become critical issues between local parties and factions. Our policy seems to have discouraged the violating of the integrity of the person by several governments.

"The State Department claims that thousands of political prisoners have been freed in over a dozen countries, that torture of prisoners has been reduced and that a growing number of permissions to emigrate and family reunifications have taken place in various countries. These humanitarian accomplishments are important. However, despite some successes in the area of democratization of foreign polities—for instance, the 1978 success in changing the government of the Dominican Republic—the policy has been relatively unsuccessful in transforming authoritarian regimes into democracies."

According to Solaun, "Rather than peaceful democratic evolution, our human rights policy has encouraged costly insurrections with counterproductive effects in the local human rights situation, while enhancing the risk that governments hostile to the United States will take hold, jeopardizing the evolution toward a peaceful international system. Nicaragua is one of these cases, currently involving the stability of the entire Central American region."

Nicaragua is in convulsion again. The opposition is more radical than previously; if it triumphs, Communists may dominate and turn Nicaragua into a Castro-line Marxist state. (US officials are not sure about the ideology and intentions of Sandinista leadership, though. As in Iran and elsewhere, the United

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States government has kept its diplomats and intelligence operatives pristinely—and ignorantly—cut off from contact with the most troublesome elements of Nicaraguan society.) Neither the Sandinistas nor the Somoza forces seems to have the power to win a decisive, permanent victory. The most likely prospect is months of continuous bloodshed.

Even now, the United States seems incapable of decisive action. Last week the State Department issued a statement that Nicaragua's problems should be resolved by the "establishment of a broad-based representative government." To diplomatic sophisticates, this was taken as a declaration of separation from Somoza, but it lacked the clarity and strength of actions taken by Ecuador, Mexico and Costa Rica, which have broken relations with the dictator. The US called an urgent meeting of foreign ministers from the Organization of American States, but US officials acknowledged we had no plan of action to promote when the ministers convene.

What should the US do? Long ago, we should have been overtly—and covertly, if necessary—helping moderate democratic oppositionists to take power in the event of Somoza's departure. We should do that now. We should formally declare—at a very high level—that we want Somoza out and will work to get him out. To show we mean business, we should organize a hemispheric military force that is prepared to oust Somoza and hold power until elections can take place. With any luck, Somoza will get the hint and negotiate his own peaceful departure. If necessary, an American States peacekeeping force should intervene. It's too bad that our human rights policy can't work merely by persuasion, diplomacy and good will, but perhaps it can't. Surely the United States should not inspire others to die for its ideals, and let them die alone.

Morton Kondracke

The view from Yugoslavia.

On Backwardness

In this day and age backwardness has become fashionable. To be backward is to be stylish. The civilized look upon the backward with envy. They are the bulwarks of progress. They are synonymous with health. They are the "avant-garde."

The backward cannot regress. They can only go forward. The backward can take only large strides.

Only the backward have a future.

Only the poor have any hope of being rich. The rich are already rich.

And just as the shabby have more beautiful dreams than the chic, only the enslaved can still dream of freedom.

Thus the superiority of the backward rests on firm foundations. Their future is altogether certain. For they will fashion their future on the past of the civilized, without repeating the obvious errors and blunders.

Hungry and barefoot, full of dreams and energy, the backward will now experience the nostalgic moments of our past. Our most beautiful memories are about to become their reality.

They need no science fiction in their leisure hours. They dream of forks, wheels, irons, their first newspaper, the discovery of film.

They are hungry for things with which we are satiated.

What wonderful excitement, what glorious hunger and curiosity!

Fortunate are the backward; unfortunate those who are not.

Fortunate are those who still seek justice, freedom and equality. They still have a chance of being courageous, honorable and celebrated. They are about to have their own poets!

With our experience behind them, they will stage more brilliant revolutions, fight more spectacular wars.

Their Napoleon will be taller. Their Alexander the Great will live longer. Their Brutus will not kill Caesar.

Unfortunate are those who have reached their goal, for they are without a goal.

The free will rot in the immutability of freedom. Satiated with happiness, they will turn to unhappiness.

While the primitive idealize the good, the emancipated wearily search for a new face of evil.

The civilized fill their cemeteries by suicide, the backward by malnutrition.

The rich tell the poor that happiness is not in being rich, but the poor won't listen. Those who have clothes remove them. Those who have no clothes put them on.

Every crumb is a holiday, a step into the future.

The civilized look at the backward on small and large screens and are puzzled by the coldbloodedness that seems to lead nowhere. They would gladly leave their seats and join the game. But it's too late. Everyone can do his bit only once. Nothing can be improved retroactively. One can only go forward, and the backward are doing it.

Let's be good to the backward. Perhaps they will give us a slice of their hunger and a sip of their thirst.

Matija Bećković

Matija Bećković is a Yugoslav writer. This essay is from the forthcoming collection *Modern Yugoslav Satire* (Cross-Cultural Communications, Merrick, New York). It was translated into English by Drenka Willen.

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Farmers go on a bender.

Gasoholics Agronomous

Gasohol may or may not be the fuel of the future, but it definitely is the fuel of the present. Right now gasohol is everybody's favorite fuel. Farmers like it because they think it would give them a new market for their products and help avert future shortages of diesel fuel, like the one they are suffering now. Urbanites like it because they think it would reduce our reliance on imported oil and help avert gasoline shortages, like the one they are suffering now. Liberals like it because they think it would strike a blow against the oil companies, and conservatives (some of them, anyway) because they think it would strike a blow against OPEC. Gasohol appeals to almost anyone worried about the energy crisis, which means almost everyone.

Its popularity is understandable. From the praises sung by some of its boosters, gasohol sounds like the ideal answer to every energy problem, and to some other problems that have nothing to do with energy. Among the claims: it would reduce our imports of foreign oil, thus weakening OPEC and protecting us against both price increases and supply reductions. It would give the oil companies some competition. It would improve automobile mileage and reduce exhaust emissions. It would reduce our balance-of-payments deficit. It would help a domestic industry: farming. And it would promise a stable, cheap source of fuel, since alcohol can be made not only from agricultural goods but from anything organic, including garbage. What more could anyone ask?

If all this sounds too good to be true, that's because it is. Gasohol isn't likely to play an important role in the energy drama any time soon, if ever—unless of course the states and the federal government make sure that it does. Given the political appeal of gasohol, they may. Already the federal government and no fewer than 12 states have channeled a hefty subsidy to gasohol by making it exempt from gasoline taxes. The Department of Agriculture is spending five million dollars this year to develop methods of converting corn to ethanol for gasohol and has provided $43 million in loan guarantees to four pilot projects. The Department of Energy has asked the Internal Revenue Service to make alcohol plants eligible for a tax credit for energy-saving systems. DOE also will soon include gasohol in its entitlements program, which amounts to providing an additional subsidy of two to three cents a gallon. Congress is also considering several bills to further encourage gasohol production and use. The most notable is that of Representative Berkley Bedell of Iowa, who wants to abolish payments to farmers for not producing and pay them instead to grow grain for alcohol. Bedell's bill also would set up a $600-million loan guarantee program for ethanol plants.

Gasohol is a mixture of 90 percent gasoline, which is refined from petroleum, and 10 percent alcohol, which can be distilled from many organic substances but comes primarily from corn today. Gasohol can be used just like gasoline, yet it uses 10 percent less petroleum; that is its charm. But diluting gasoline with alcohol to produce gasohol doesn't make economic sense unless alcohol costs less to produce than gasoline does. Otherwise, it's like watering the beer with champagne. As long as alcohol costs more than gasoline, gasohol will cost more than gasoline. The easy question is whether alcohol costs less to produce than gasoline today. The answer is no. The tough question is whether innovations in alcohol distilling and further petroleum price rises will make alcohol cost less than gasoline in the future. The answer is still probably no.

Ethanol presently sells for $1.59 per gallon. Gasoline, by contrast, can be produced for less than 60 cents per gallon. (The retail price of gasoline includes federal and state taxes, transportation costs and dealer markup.) Yet there are more than 800 gas stations selling gasohol in the US. Gasohol is selling at the same price as unleaded premium gasoline in some states only because of the huge subsidies it gets. Since each gallon of gasohol is only 10 percent alcohol, the exemption from the four-cent-per-gallon federal gasoline tax for *gasohol* adds up to a subsidy of 40 cents per gallon for *alcohol* used to replace gasoline. State tax exemptions mean still larger subsidies. In Iowa, for example, the state gasoline tax is 8.5 cents per gallon, meaning each gallon of alcohol used gets a subsidy of 85 cents—bringing the total subsidy to $1.25 per gallon. Thanks to these subsidies Iowa motorists can buy gasohol for roughly the same price as unleaded premium. But every gallon of gasoline saved costs the taxpayers $1.25.

This is a lot to pay for easing our dependence on OPEC. The federal tax subsidy for alcohol adds up to nearly $17 a barrel, which is roughly equal to the average world price of petroleum. In Iowa the total subsidy comes to $52.50 a barrel. The real cost of domestically produced alcohol, when the selling price is tacked on, is about four times the cost of a barrel of OPEC-produced crude oil. If this is a cure to our energy problems, it looks a lot worse than the disease.

Gasohol's present high cost isn't justified by its other social benefits, which are either imaginary or insignificant. Its reputation for improving mileage came from a sloppily run test by the state of Nebraska, which concluded that gasohol could provide as much as five percent more miles per gallon than ordinary gasoline. Unfortunately, more tightly controlled tests have failed to support this conclusion; some even suggest that gasohol provides fewer miles per gallon. DOE now says gasohol mileage isn't appreciably different from gasoline. The Environmental Protection Agency has ruled that the exhaust emissions produced by gasohol meet its standards, but here too gasohol represents no significant improvement over unleaded gasoline. Car

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makers have agreed to honor their warranties on cars using gasohol, a recent reversal, but they see some problems. A study by General Motors suggested that alcohol may damage some emission filters and engine gaskets. Here the problems lie with the engines, which were not designed to run on alcohol. There is nothing wrong with alcohol, or with a gasoline-alcohol blend, as a fuel for an internal-combustion engine. Henry Ford designed his first car to run on either gasoline or alcohol. Due to short oil supplies, Germany ran its World War II tanks on alcohol. More recently, Brazil, which imports nearly all of its oil, has embarked on a program to convert all its cars to either gasohol or pure alcohol. Even in a country with no domestic petroleum reserves worth mentioning and a readily available source of alcohol—sugar—alcohol still costs twice as much to produce as gasoline.

Gasohol's defenders tend to downplay these large cost differences. David Hallberg, an aide to Bedell, says that the cost figures for gasoline are based on an average of crude oil costs that includes both old, price-controlled domestic oil and higher-priced OPEC crude. Since future fuel supplies will come increasingly from abroad (or from decontrolled domestic wells), he says, gasohol should be compared with gasoline produced from the higher-priced crude. Even granting these assumptions, crude oil costs aren't likely to rise enough to bring gasoline prices up to the level of ethanol. Since crude oil costs make up less than half of the final cost of producing gasoline, they would have to increase six times over—to nearly $70 a barrel—to raise gasoline costs to the current level of ethanol. Even this increase might not be enough to make alcohol competitive, since higher gasoline costs presumably would raise the cost of producing alcohol.

This last problem points up another drawback to using alcohol as fuel. It takes energy to grow the crop, and it takes more energy to distill it into alcohol. Farmers use diesel fuel in tractors, trucks and other farm machines; vast amounts of natural gas are used in the production of fertilizer. Most alcohol distilleries run on oil or natural gas. In all, current methods of making alcohol consume about a third more energy than they produce. If the alcohol is being used for martinis, this doesn't matter; if it's being used for energy, it's self-defeating. Gasohol advocates say that recent technological improvements in distilling have corrected this energy imbalance, but others disagree. In any event, a recent study of new distilling methods by the Agriculture Department concluded that "few if any of these systems currently pass the test of commercial feasibility."

Even granting the most optimistic assumptions and the most favorable government policies, gasohol won't help much in solving our energy problems. The US lacks the distilling capacity to permit a mass shift to gasohol. Wallace Tyner, a Purdue professor who favors increased use of gasohol, says that US distillers now could turn out no more than 250 million gallons of ethanol a year for fuel; the less optimistic Agriculture Department says they'd be doing well to produce a tenth of that.

Even 250 million gallons a year would supplant only one four-hundredth of our annual gasoline consumption. Even a crash program such as that proposed by Senator Frank Church of Idaho would have gasohol capture only a tenth of the gasoline market by 1990. And since gasohol is still nine-tenths gasoline, even meeting that goal would reduce gasoline consumption by only one percent. J. G. Kendrick, an agricultural economist at the University of Nebraska, makes the point more graphically. "Every gallon of gasohol saves about seven tablespoons of foreign crude," he says, "providing you don't use any energy making it."

Gasohol's proponents think that as gasohol grows as a share of the nation's energy, its cost will fall. But it may very well do just the opposite. The main reason ethanol costs as little as it does—which is still a lot compared to gasoline—is the currently low price of corn. Corn prices aren't likely to fall; in fact they are so low now that they can hardly help but rise. And any substantial rise in gasohol production will require a lot more corn than is presently being produced. DOE would like to see 10 billion gallons of alcohol being converted to fuel every year. That would require about four billion bushels of corn—about two-thirds of total annual corn production in the US. Naturally this increase would occur gradually, so the effect on price would also be gradual. But there is every reason to expect corn prices to rise as the demand increases. Gasohol prices would rise correspondingly.

Ethanol doesn't have to be produced from corn; it can be made out of sugar, wood pulp, garbage and any number of organic materials. One of gasohol's principal selling points is precisely the wide range of sources. But most of these would require more expensive methods to produce alcohol. DOE says garbage would be better suited for making methanol, which unfortunately is much more toxic and volatile than ethanol, and causes a variety of problems in automobile engines. Kendrick says the supplies of wood pulp, garbage and the like are not big enough to produce much ethanol anyway.

The truth is that no one in Washington, particularly on Capitol Hill, has much interest in these exotic sources of alcohol. The reason midwesterners like Bedell and Church are so enthusiastic about gasohol, and the reason so many midwestern states are subsidizing it, is that they see it as a way to please their most vocal constituents—farmers. Purdue's Wallace Tyner frankly says that he sees government promotion of gasohol as a better way to subsidize American farmers. Instead of paying farmers $1.6 billion a year not to grow crops, as we do now, he says, wouldn't it be better to pay them to grow grain for gasohol? Of course it would. The flaw in this argument is the notion that

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farmers *ought* to be subsidized. (See "Welfare Tractors," *TNR*, March 3). The present subsidies are hardly more than a lucrative welfare program for one of the nation's more powerful interest groups. American farmers are uniquely brazen in portraying themselves as the last bastion of rugged individualism even as they demand that the government pay them large sums of money so they can uphold this tradition.

So gasohol should not be seen as an answer to the nation's energy problems. Its potential is limited at best, and its cost is certain to be much higher than any OPEC is likely to make us pay. If the federal government wants to increase our domestic fuel supplies, it would be better off subsidizing synthetic fuel from tar sands and shale, which besides being considerably cheaper than alcohol are also much more abundant. But if OPEC's price continues to rise, this eventually will make the development of these sources of oil economically feasible even without a subsidy. Current estimates suggest that these types of oil could be developed for $25 to $30 per barrel, which is much cheaper than alcohol will be in the foreseeable future. The comparative lack of interest in synthetic fuel, particularly among farm state congressmen, reflects political expediency, not economic reality. Our infatuation with gasohol will not do much to cure any of our energy problems. But it will make some farmers rich.

Stephen Chapman

Better inside pissing out
than outside pissing in.

Why Schlesinger Isn't Sacked

The notion that Energy Secretary James Schlesinger might be the first member to leave President Carter's cabinet was advanced beyond the rumor stage when Carter's domestic affairs adviser, Stuart Eizenstat, appeared on CBS's "Face the Nation." Eizenstat was asked, "Is the senior White House staff beginning to lose confidence in James Schlesinger? Is it true you are ready to go to the president and tell him he ought to be removed?"

Hands folded neatly in front of him, Eizenstat characteristically chose his words very carefully, pinching out the answer: "Dr. Schlesinger really gets a bad rap for all the energy problems that this country has for reasons that are not of his doing. . . . I think he's doing an admirable job in trying to deal with a very difficult problem, and I don't think one should look to Dr. Schlesinger as a scapegoat. The president continues to have full confidence in Dr. Schlesinger."

> *Q: The question was whether the* senior staff *continues to have full confidence in him. Do you?*
> *A: I think that Dr. Schlesinger is doing as good a job as anybody could do in his job.*

Eizenstat was telling the truth, exactly, though he wasn't really answering the question. It is well enough known by now that several of Carter's domestic policy and political advisers—including Eizenstat himself and Tim Kraft—would like Carter to sack James Schlesinger.

They want him out for many of the same reasons that those who were around during the transition didn't want him around in the first place: Schlesinger is a self-proclaimed Taft Republican with hawkish views on defense issues that are not at all in line with Carter administration policies. And he's the leading exponent of nuclear energy at a time when the anti-nuclear movement is a rapidly growing grassroots force. Besides, there is very little public confidence in the present energy policy and the Department of Energy is an organizational shambles. In short, Schlesinger has bungled the job and become a major political liability, as much as any Cabinet officer can be.

Carter met with Schlesinger in 1976, just before the second presidential debate on foreign policy, when Gerald Ford's former secretary of defense trekked to Plains to coach the challenger on military and strategic affairs. It is reported that the candidate was instantly impressed. Schlesinger had a definite, succinct grasp of the issues, plenty of facts at his fingertips and he was thoroughly organized.

Schlesinger also provided some useful political information about Ford's vacillations on defense spending when Schlesinger was still part of the cabinet. That permitted Carter to soften up Ford in the opening rounds of the debate, before Ford delivered the knockout blow to his own chin with his famous gaffe about Eastern Europe. Schlesinger had been helpful and impressive. After his victory, Carter wanted to reappoint the man that Nixon hired and Ford fired as secretary of defense. He had to be talked out of it.

Even as energy secretary, Schlesinger started out with less support than anyone in the Cabinet. At the Defense Department he promoted a tough line with the Russians and more money to update the arsenal, so he had no standing among liberals. Insofar as conservatives cared whether or not he got a Carter appointment, they wanted him back at his old desk in the Pentagon, which was also the job Schlesinger preferred. Schlesinger has no great strength in his own party. Republicans on Capitol Hill were perfectly happy when Schlesinger was fired, because they perceived, as Ford did, that the man couldn't or wouldn't get along with Congress. Asked recently what differences he had with Carter's energy program, a Republican senator said: "First thing, he hired a fired Republican

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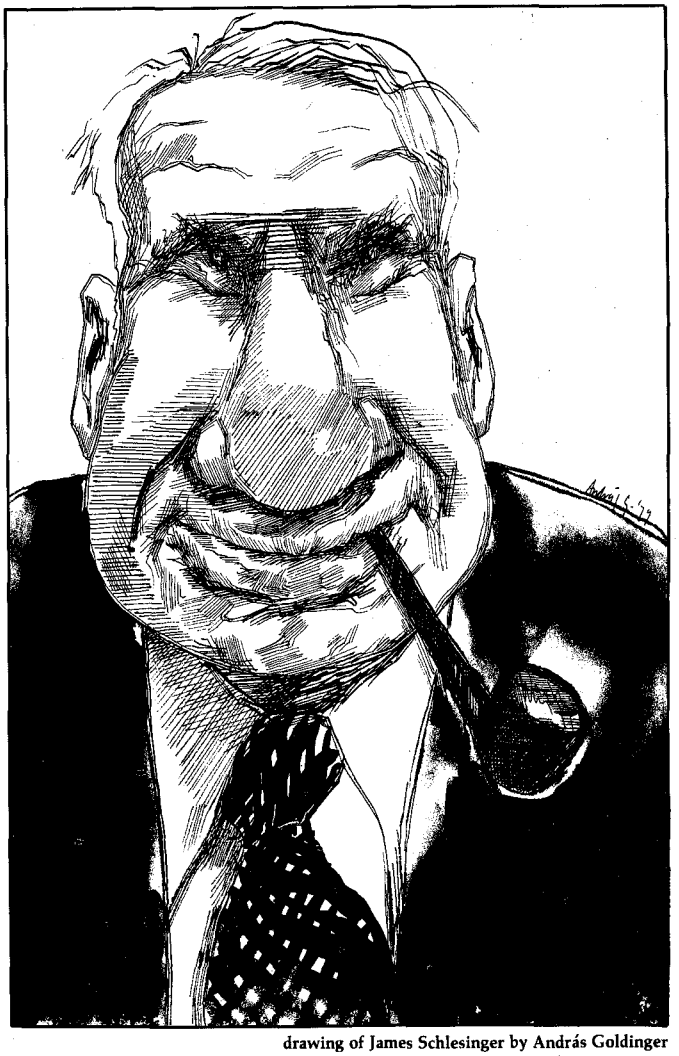
Cabinet member to run it."

Since becoming energy secretary, Schlesinger has gone out of his way to prove he is as pigheaded, abrasive and quarrelsome as he ever was. He shows no greater ability to get along with Congress or others in the administration than he did under Ford. In those days Schlesinger clashed so openly and often with Henry Kissinger over detente that Ford's advisers were bringing him the same advice that Carter hears today—"Fire Schlesinger before it's too late." When Ford finally did fire Schlesinger, he confided that his discontent wasn't essentially over policy: he just couldn't get along with the man. This experience is shared by many of his present associates, but not by Carter himself. Schlesinger considers Secretary of State Vance soft on the Russians, Secretary of the Treasury Blumenthal a pollyanna on the economy, and Domestic Policy Chief Eizenstat misguided on who should pay the costs of solving America's energy problems.

Though he's not matched against anyone as skillful as Kissinger in the current skirmishing, Schlesinger has shown he still can be a tough political infighter. When word began to get around that some Carter advisers were after his scalp, columns and news analyses began to crop up detailing why the president wouldn't, shouldn't or couldn't fire his energy secretary. No one doubted the source.

James Schlesinger is the consummate Washington bureaucrat, self-aggrandizing to the point of fabrication but talented at passing the buck when a policy goes awry. After Nixon's abdication, for example, Schlesinger put it about that Pentagon was under strict orders to clear any White House directives through him, the implication being that if Nixon had flipped out completely and tried a coup or something, Schlesinger would have saved the republic. It was a bald-faced lie and he was caught at it. When Carter's first energy program foundered in Congress, Schlesinger's line was that he'd only had 90 days to put it together (a deadline insisted upon by the White House) and therefore was bound to rely on Democratic energy experts whose biases ran too much toward conservation and too little toward increasing production. Schlesinger has honed his skills at bureaucratic maneuvering through a series of Washington jobs: Bureau of the Budget, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, CIA director, secretary of defense and, finally, secretary of energy. It should have been a sign of things to come when, after campaigning for two years against Washington bureaucrats, Jimmy Carter finally ran into the type in its purest form and found himself bowled over.

There is no doubt that James Schlesinger is a political liability. To the extent that Carter's energy policy depends on conservation and driving up the price of everything, its potential for success depends on public trust and cooperation. There is almost no conflicting evidence in the polls about this: the people simply don't believe the government. A few months ago, most



drawing of James Schlesinger by András Goldinger

Americans supported oil decontrol in the belief it would encourage domestic production. Now they've heard the details of the Carter plan and read about oil company profits, and Lou Harris polls show a dramatic shift toward opposition. NBC polls show that seven of 10 Americans now think that the current shortage is just another excuse for the oil companies to charge higher prices. And, without exception, surveys of public opinion show inflation and energy at the top of Americans' list of problems facing the country. In mid-June Schlesinger's deputy, John O'Leary, appeared before a committee of Congress to explain that his agency had made an agreement with the oil companies to keep certain information about oil and gas supplies secret—not to share it with the public or other government agencies. Why? "The companies simply don't like the public peering over their shoulders," O'Leary explained. It is not an arrangement calculated to raise public confidence in the operation run by James Schlesinger.

Those who work at Energy report that morale is low; people spend all their time coping with the urgent decisions of each day, and no one is engaged in realistic planning for the long term. No one has overall responsibility for legislative liaison, and four presidential appointees have a hand in congressional affairs.

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One policy-level staff member says, "Absolutely no one over here has figured out what it will do to Western economies when the OPEC countries meet next time and raise the price of crude from $14.50 to $22.50 a barrel." On the very weekend Schlesinger predicted an early end to gas lines, gasoline all but dried up in the nation's capital. There's a nice irony in the fact that there are 20,000 bureaucrats in Washington, DC, working on the problem of energy, and this city is experiencing the worst shortages in the country.

So why shouldn't, can't or won't Jimmy Carter fire James Schlesinger?

Because Carter likes Schlesinger, still thinks he's smart and, for the most part, agrees with his analysis of the energy problem. Besides messing up the Energy Department, which Carter, for some unfathomable reason, believes no one could run any better, Schlesinger really hasn't done anything the president finds seriously objectionable. Jimmy Carter prides himself on standing by associates under fire, as he stood by UN Ambassador Andrew Young and his beleaguered budget director, Bert Lance. Also, Carter and Schlesinger made most of the major energy decisions together, and if one man is to blame, the other is too.

Schlesinger is circulating the argument that he should stay because he is a political lightning rod, attracting criticism that otherwise would strike Carter. Schlesinger is only partially right. Consumer groups and senators like Democratic Whip Alan Cranston, George McGovern, Howard Metzenbaum, John Durkin and Dennis DeConcini have called for his ouster. (So has *The New Republic*; see "The Moral Equivalent of Verdun," *TNR*, April 14.) But throwing Schlesinger's body off the sled wouldn't make a particle of difference to most of these critics. They're primarily opposed to Carter's energy *policies*, and his energy secretary is a symbolic irritant. If it's true that Carter is wedded to these policies regardless of whether Schlesinger stays or goes, Schlesinger might as well stay. Jim Flug, head of the consumer group, Energy Action, says, "I'm just as satisfied at this point to see Schlesinger stay. As long as the department is in such a mess, the policy is so terrible and Carter is in such a political hole, it's better to have somebody out front who makes it less credible than more credible."

But the political lightning rod argument is really weak because a cabinet member can only distract so much criticism. Jimmy Carter's name goes on the primary ballots next spring, not James Schlesinger's. Robert McNamara was supposed to be Lyndon Johnson's lightning rod in the days of the Vietnam escalation, and that didn't work either. Besides, Schlesinger doesn't bother absorbing the criticism if he doesn't feel like it. When the nuclear demonstrators came to Washington after the accident at Three Mile Island, Schlesinger ignored their request for a meeting, leaving it to his boss to have a predictably acrimonious session with the leaders.

Of all the reasons that Jimmy Carter doesn't or can't fire his embattled energy secretary, the most compelling is that some of the president's political counselors remember what Schlesinger did the last time he was sacked. He immediately joined up with the opposition, becoming a foreign policy adviser for Ronald Reagan in the primaries, then shifting to Carter in the general election. Schlesinger is a survivor who has let it be known in the current firestorm that he means to save his own ass. Stories about Schlesinger's reservations on SALT II have begun to surface around Washington, and he remains a credible figure among military hardliners. Also, he has been in on every major energy decision in the Carter administration and doubtless has his own version of what went wrong. One source close to the administration says, "Who knows what he'd do, probably go write speeches for John Connally. But the vote on SALT is too close and the energy issue is too explosive to take the risk. He'd just be another loose cannon on the deck." In other words, Jimmy Carter is reluctant to fire James Schlesinger for much the same reason Lyndon Johnson did not sack J. Edgar Hoover: "It's better to have him inside the tent pissing out than outside pissing in."

If the quiet, determined Eizenstat is not going to be able to get rid of James Schlesinger, he has done the next best thing. He has taken over the basic operation of energy policy himself. Every evening, from 5 to 7 pm, about 20 representatives from the domestic policy staff, OMB, the Council of Economic Advisers, Treasury, the Energy Department, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Council on Environmental Quality and sometimes Transportation, Interior and Justice meet under Eizenstat's direction. Ostensibly the meetings are held to coordinate energy matters among the various departments and keep tabs on the initiatives Carter announced in his April 5 energy address. This group designed the special rule allocating diesel fuel to farmers, for example. It also will work out the adminstration's response to the various synthetic fuel bills in Congress. It will decide how to carry forward the legislative battles on the windfall profits tax and coal slurry pipelines, and what to do about Senator Edward Kennedy's anti-trust bill, which has an impact on the Energy Department. In short, it will run the Carter adminstration's energy policy.

If the White House has decided that James Schlesinger would be a greater political liability outside than he is inside, it has also determined that energy policy is too vital to be left to Schlesinger and his minions. "Schlesinger is being left to do the big thinking," says one person who attends the White House meetings, "but Stuart Eizenstat is now the *de facto* secretary of energy."

Ken Bode

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A proposal in honor of the United Nations International Year of the Child.

W.C. Fields in *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break.* Photo courtesy of Movie Star News.

Children: Our Most Precious Resource

by Nicholas von Hoffman

Don't stop eating your porridge on receipt of the news, but this is the International Year of the Child. The Year of the Goat, the Donkey, the Pig or the Veal would be more helpful in this year of the energy shortage, but someone at the United Nations remembered it was exactly 20 years ago that the Declaration of the Rights of the Child was promulgated. And so, instead of letting nursing brats sleep, they had to commemorate the anniversary. In the last two decades, no one in the United Nations or outside of it has so much as looked at its high-sounding palaver, but the UN goes back to dead declarations of good intentions the way a dog goes back to the spot to eat its barf. The International Year of the Child, or IYC, or better yet, Yic, has been the occasion for the heads of state of the industrialized nations, the developing nations and the poor, no-account, lazy nations to agree on something for once. They agree that the child is our most precious natural resource. Much yickity-yak about God loving the children most and that's why he made so many of the horrid little things.

Nicholas von Hoffman is a syndicated paedophobe.

You can be sure that any sentiment the heads of all the nations of the world, civilized and uncivilized, concur with must be wrong. Any damn fool could have told them that children are not our most precious resource; oil is. Indeed a fitting celebration for the Year of the Child would be the perfection of a process for the conversion of children into crude oil. (Children's manners are generally so bad that it will take much refining before they can be used in today's high compression automobile engines.)

If dinosaurs were obliging enough to stampede themselves into pits where they turned into heating oil for homes, children, with their more highly evolved nervous systems, ought to be even better candidates for biomass-production of energy. I estimate that we should be able to get three barrels of very crude oil from each child. And let it be remembered that by obtaining energy in this fashion, we will have changed oil from a nonrenewable to a renewable resource.

Some people, acting under uninstructed although sincere humanitarian principles, will object to these proposals on the grounds that they are barbaric, criminal, etc., etc., and it is true that baby killing is an

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occupation with a poor public image. It ranks down there at the bottom with mass murder and exceeding the 55 mile-per-hour speed limit.

Therefore, in deference to the squeamish and the whole ACLU crowd, let's limit oil production to children we were going to kill or starve to death anyhow. Like the Vietnamese boat people. Don't shoot 'em if they try to land; stick 'em down the stack of a cracking plant in an oil refinery. We might consider doing the same with wetback kids, for whom neither the United States nor their own Mexican government, obviously, has any use. Once the kids have been turned into lubricating fluid for our transmissions, they will truly be the little greasers that anti-Chicano bigots say they are.

Just think of it. Arabian oil made from genuine Arabians. Even in the case of WASP children destined to be oil consumers, the mere knowledge that the family car is propelled by fuel extracted from puppy dogs, kittens and less fortunate children should have a salubrious and sobering effect on the little rascals. Any sign of misbehavior can be met by a parental threat to take them to the plant where other members of their age cadre are being emulsified and extruded in the form of Hefty Garbage Bags to be sold by Jonathan Winters on TV.

Making oil out of children—the first practical suggestion for dealing with the energy crisis—will also end the extended and profitless debate over building that accursed Clinch River Breeder Reactor. Breeding children for energy entails no danger of radioactivity and offers considerable opportunity for pleasure. Gasoline manufactured from children causes no air pollution when burned, as long as the kids weren't fed junk foods before being sent to the refinery.

How does this approach fit in with the Year of the Child? The UN informational brochure says that Yic is "an opportunity to focus on children and put them in their proper place." Of course, the UN and its fifth column adherents have a lot of social-worky kinds of things to say of the vague and unspecific sort that characterize a cause that is too good and too widely approved of. Hence the brochure tells us how to observe the Year of the Child by adjuring us to "look around, listen . . . talk to your friends . . . start a discussion group." It also orders us to "Care. And get involved."

Whenever you're exhorted to "get involved," roll over in bed. It's like those TV ads telling us to catch baseball fever. The Year of the Child is actually an occasion for well-paid people to attend all-expenses-paid seminars at fancy hotels where they will don the masks of earnestness and admonish us for our brutality toward children. Tax dollars will be used to pay a gray-flecked child psychologist to explain to us that parents who don't physically abuse their children commit acts of barbarism by word. Abusers all, sinners all. A recent issue of the IYC report—yes, they have a newsletter—quotes one Marian Wright Edelman, Director of the Children's Defense Fund, as saying, "Our child welfare programs fail these children, make a mockery of our professional belief in the family and waste taxpayers' money." The answer to this threat to our "professional beliefs" is perhaps the official IYC poster contest. Or maybe redress to Ms. Edelman's grievances is to be found inside the head of the baby elephant with the IYC logo painted on his forehead, as pictured in the same issue of the newsletter.

Is it stupidity, or the cynical knowledge you need to cook up a sentimental bunko game to get the money for seminars, that motivates the international bureaucrats to belch forth the Year of the Child? What, pray tell, happens to children next year or last year? Why must we every two decades be reminded to take the kids to the occulists to have their eyes tested?

Get involved, they say. Well, get involved with what? Selling "the IYC commemorative stamp . . . to be issued in Saudi Arabia . . . all revenue from this stamp will go to UNICEF," and next year we can hope for another royal decree elevating women in that child-centered land to the civil and legal status of a goat.

Children, it scarcely needs to be observed, will do no better than their parents and their parents will do no better than the society they live in. Our society needs oil, ergo, throw junior in the vat and cook him until he turns high octane. Or we can sell young Mehitabel to Saudi Arabia as a slave, but make sure we get payment in oil and are not compensated in Royal Arabian IYC postage stamps.

For deviant parents who love their children more than their gasoline, a last word of advice: keep the kiddies in on weekends, or whenever the stations are closed and the motorists are hungry.

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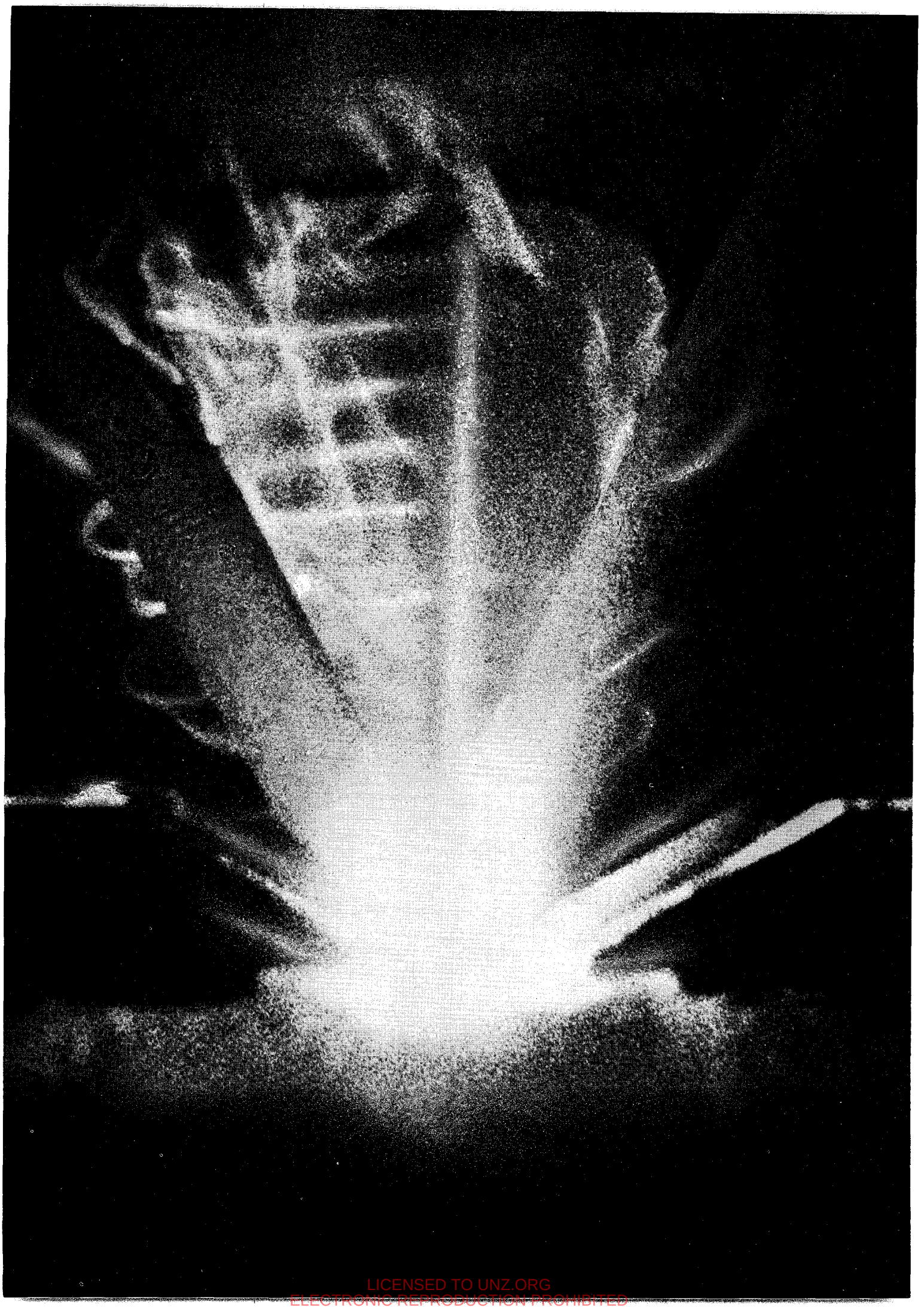

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The Atomic Bond.

Using tiny explosive charges, Western Electric engineers are bonding metals with the elemental "glue" of the Universe.

Here's how it works. The atoms of all metals have a natural attraction for one another. If it weren't for the ever-present film of impurities coating the surface—the oxides, nitrides, and absorbed gasses—all metal atoms would bond to each other when brought together.

Exploding Things Together.

But the force of a high-intensity explosion on two adjacent metals will clean away the film of impurities. The explosion literally "blows" the impurities off the surfaces. So the atoms of the different metals can bond together.

The bond that results is stronger than both of the metals themselves.

As an industrial technique, explosive bonding has proved valuable in the manufacture of such heavyweight products as bi-metallic gun barrels.

Pinpoint Explosions.

But how would explosives work in the delicate, intricate world of telephone circuitry?

Scientists at Western Electric's Engineering Research Center solved the problem by developing ways to miniaturize and control explosive bonding. Soon, they could splice the ends of two thin communications wires inside a miniature explosive-coated sleeve.

And they could repair tiny defective contacts on delicate circuit boards. These gold contacts (membrane-thin "fingers" 1/10 by 3/4 of an inch) are reclad by thin sheets of gold foil (.0005 inches thick), coated with explosives. The repairs are literally "blown" onto the contacts, without disturbing the delicate circuitry less than 1/10 of an inch away.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Stars in Their Courses

There is no such thing as an American film star. There are French stars, Italian and Japanese and Indian stars, all of whom can have full careers without one dram of appeal outside their own countries. But no one has ever become and remained a star in the United States without international appeal. Hollywood has always depended on the foreign market for a good part of its receipts—nowadays that part is expected to be 50 percent. What's beneath that, naturally, is the fact that the world wants American pictures. In virtually every filmgoing country in the world, American pictures are a major part of film experience.

So when we look at one of our stars—of course all this is raised by the death of John Wayne—it's interesting to imagine how the rest of the world may have seen him or her. Remember one proviso: voices are usually dubbed in most countries. (When I was doing some dubbing into American at the Titanus studios of Rome in 1956, I saw an odd-looking group of people coming and going every day. When I asked who they were, I was told that the tall skinny man had been contracted for years to be the voice of James Cagney in Italy, the dumpy woman Barbara Stanwyck, and so on.) Allow for a different but probably apposite voice in each of a number of different countries, and what did Wayne signify?

The American continent, I think. The huge, endlessly potential continent. Gary Cooper had as much of the (in the best sense) legendary American character, but his body and walk could have been those of, say, a Scotsman. Not Wayne. He was our continent.

Wayne was different from Cooper in another way. Wayne sometimes played eccentric characters, obsessed, mean, devious, unforgiving. Cooper was a kind of lanky Yankee saint. (So, through much of his career, has Henry Fonda been, but Fonda is out of this discussion because, though he is certainly a first-rank star, he is also a superb actor. Wayne and Cooper developed personae which they controlled and exhibited skillfully, as a trainer might exhibit an acrobat.) Wayne had much of Cooper's saintliness, in a more rugged version, but he also had some darkness. One of the best examples of the feral wisdom of the good makers of popular culture is the way Wayne's producers and directors and writers recognized these other color possibilities in Wayne, and used them. Wayne himself knew it. He said in an interview (*Film Heritage*, Summer 1975):

> *Let me explain something that happened in my career . . . I have never tried to play the pure hero . . .* [*Note: this is an exaggeration.*] *In every picture that I've done I've tried to have some human weakness and admit those human weaknesses. The gangster picture came out and they were making the hero out of thugs. They drove everybody out of the Westerns except me, and they kept making Westerns with me because my character was not too straight. . . . Nobody seems to realize, speaking of an anti-hero, I was playing Laughton's part in* Mutiny on the Bounty *in* Red River. *It's just the story of* Mutiny on the Bounty *put into a Western. . . .*

Allow again for some stretching, and add that he played in films other than Westerns. Still this represents his image of himself.

And it seems reasonable to infer that this is how the world outside saw him: immense, easy, honest, generous without soppiness, strong, self-reliant, taciturnly violent, and never more violent—never blacker—than in defense of his ideas of property and propriety. No one film star can epitomize a country, especially such a vast heterogeneous one as ours. (If Wayne was a big international star, so is Dustin Hoffman.) But ever since his first big success in *Stagecoach* (1939), Wayne evidently represented one way that the rest of the world wanted to think of America.

Another star, older than Wayne and a star before him, appears in a new picture, and I can't remember anything like it. Mae West was 40 years old when she *began* making films in 1932. Now here is *Sextette* (Crown International), made from a play of hers that she toured in 1961.

When Lucille Ball did *Mame* in 1973, she was misguided: she was about 15 years too old for the part; but at least she stepped into a proved commercial vehicle. Here is West, who made her theater debut in 1897 (aged five), playing a movie sex star in a script that is like a summer-camp parody of her past films. (She looks like a mobile mummy except for her hands, which are astonishingly young.) It's as if Norma Desmond of *Sunset Boulevard* had been able to make a film starring herself.

I saw West once on Broadway in her own play *Catherine Was Great* (1944), where she played the Russian empress and delivered an immortal second-act curtain-line: "Masha, give me my cloak and my wig. I have work to do." That was enjoyable self-kidding, as most of her films had been. Even at her height in the 1930s, she was called the greatest female impersonator of all time. But were there no kindly friends, no firm

Films Worth Seeing

The Deer Hunter. Men proving their maleness at home and in Vietnam. Wobbly writing, excellent acting.

The In-Laws. Andrew Bergman wrote a good farce, about a dentist and a gangster whose kids are about to marry, and the performance gets better as it goes.

Norma Rae. Labor organizing in the Deep South today. A bit naive but a lot moving. Sally Field's field day.

The Tree of Wooden Clogs. Ermanno Olmi's three-hour story of Italian peasants, c. 1900. Much truth and compassion, middling to fair art.

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advisers, to stop this crazy old woman from making this new film?

Barbra Streisand seems to be getting to the Mae West level of career insanity much earlier. Apparently she too can do what she likes, and what she likes is *The Main Event* (Warner Bros.) I won't list the authors of the screenplay or the director because it seems obvious that every aspect of this gem has the Streisand touch, ordered up by her. If you thought that her comedy *For Pete's Sake* (1974) was cheap and unfunny, wait till you see this. Better—wait and *don't* see it.

Streisand is a top perfume manufacturer whose business manager embezzles her into bankruptcy. She is left with no asset except the contract of a prize-fighter which she acquired as a tax loss. Now the fighter is her only way to make a living, and she stirs him into action. (The fighter is Ryan O'Neal, who to me will always be Ryan Oatmeal.) It's not a bad premise for a romantic farce, but it's ruined by vulgarity and incredibility. Streisand is supposed to have been a hot-shot businesswoman, but she drenches her role with stupid cuteness and cute stupidity.

I've never been a Streisand zealot, but it's always been possible to see her talents, as such, especially singing. Here she doesn't sing, except once on the sound-track, and her professionalism has never been worse displayed. In her mismanagement of herself, she is giving new meaning to the term "self-abuse."

On the other hand, other two hands, two big hands, there's Sylvester Stallone. His *Rocky II* (UA) is a real boxing picture—well, a "real" one. And unlike *Godfather II* or the new *Butch and Sundance*, it's a genuine sequel: it begins with the end of the first *Rocky* and takes Rocky on through a match (with his girl) and a rematch (with the world champion).

Stallone is a multi-gifted star, but he's also a movie-loving agreeable nut. The first *Rocky*, which he wrote and starred in but didn't direct, was a 1930s film updated. Then he did all three jobs for *F.I.S.T.*, which was a no-less-good fabrication about the labor movement, and *Paradise Alley*, which was like an animated cartoon about slum life done with actors. Now he's done all three jobs again for *Rocky II*, and I think it's better than its dad. Stallone is at least equally taking, Talia Shire's mousiness is much better exploited, and Burt Young's brother-in-law is less gross in size and performance.

Stallone knows a lot about tear-jerking—the hospital bedside scenes after his wife's confinement, the jogging fighter being followed through the Philadelphia streets by a growing mob of children, the blessing by the priest from his window just before the fight; and helped by six film editors, he whoops up the coda of his picture like Tchaikovsky. (Bill Conti—who seemingly writes every score these days—did the pump-pump music.) The bout at the climax is bloody and fierce but exciting.

Stallone's basic gift is an unembarrassed, joyful grasp of the falsities of deliberate film fiction. It's hard to resist a man with such a gift for pleasant falsifying who so clearly enjoys using it.

Jim Miller on pop music

Moods for Moderns

The most obvious thing happening in popular music today is disco. It is everywhere: on the air, in the streets, at home, on television, in commercials, at breaks during sporting events. The toast of industry conventions, it is touted by *Newsweek* as well as the *Village Voice*, embraced by older rock stars like the Rolling Stones, Rod Stewart and Paul McCartney. In the battle with old-fashioned rock for record sales and airplay, disco seems to be winning. A growing number of disco-styled hits "go platinum," while a growing number of disco radio stations can point to the kind of high ratings that used to be a monopoly of rock formats. In February, the *Los Angeles Times* made an estimate—insiders call it conservative—that disco was already worth eight billion dollars. As local discotheques sprout throughout middle America, hopes abound in New York and Los Angeles that this fad has the longevity to be mined with foresight and calculation.

Why? Because disco, more than a music, is an entire "lifestyle," arousing new appetites, generating new needs, creating new markets. Disco involves fashion, foppishness, beautiful people, an expensive presentation of self. It has made a spectacle of the superfluous in an age of diminishing expectations—and for industries geared to entertainment and escape, that spells undiminished profits.

The social situation of disco has helped spawn controversy. Faced with complaints about "disco clones," witnesses for the defense accentuate the positive: disco is ethnic, urban, cosmopolitan, sexually open, a participatory experience, an unpredictable happening. Skeptics focus on the formulas, the stereotyping, the glittering emptiness of disco culture. Defenders retort that such critics are either sexist, racist, rhythmically unfit or all three. Skeptics may well wonder whether devotees of disco are fans of a music or simply zealots of one more prefab cult.

About one thing, however, there can

Noteworthy New Releases

Joe Jackson, *Look Sharp!* (A&M): from England, a clever new wave rocker, and a major musical voice, with the wit to take economy seriously, and the ingenuity to make it memorable.

Raydio, *Rock On* (Arista): pop funk conceived, produced and seamlessly played by a subtle talent, guitarist Ray Parker Jr.

Art Ensemble of Chicago, *Nice Guys* (ECM): one of the truly innovative groups playing improvised black music, in a varied program that does justice to their genius.

Pere Ubu, *Dub Housing* (Chrysalis): sonic skits for the wasteland, from our most unsettling rock band.

Arthur Blythe, *Lenox Avenue Breakdown* (Columbia): with help from a flute, a tuba, and drummer Jack DeJohnette, alto saxophonist Blythe dances through earthy arrangements, played with virtuoso intensity.

McFadden & Whitehead (Philadelphia International): Sophisticated disco, funk and soul balladry, from two of Philly's most prolific producers, finally performing their own music.

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be no dispute. Disco is the music of the moment. At radio stations, record companies and discotheques, the bottom line proves it.

But where did this ubiquitous new sound come from? And how in the past year has disco managed to inundate America and become the commercial pacesetter for popular music today?

Like most of the vital elements of American pop, disco by birth was a halfbreed, an unlikely marriage of frothy pop, downhome funk and cartoon simplicity. Its inspiration can be traced back to the lucrative intuition of Motown's Barry Gordy, who guessed that white Americans would find the rhythmic and gospel intensity of black music irresistible, if only the sound were homogenized, the riffs recycled, the lyrics made accessible to any adolescent kid, and the stars neatly groomed with an unthreatening wholesomeness. What Diana Ross did for Motown, Donna Summer and the Bee Gees have done for disco.

From the more hard-edged late 1960s funk style pioneered by James Brown and refined by Sly Stone, disco has taken over jagged rhythms made seductive through repetition. From European pop, it has acquired a love of melodramatic poses, electronic gadgetry, streamlined strings, faceless voices, and the kind of melodic cues that treat human listeners the way Pavlov treated his dogs. From the masters of Philadelphia soul, Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, disco's producers and engineers have learned the art of recording and mixing every instrument with its own sharply etched presence, making cymbals sizzle, bass drums thump, strings and horns shimmer through a delicate haze of reverb, a cushion of echo. Above all, as the centrality of the producer in this genre suggests, disco is obsessed with technique. However funky it may seem, at heart it is *clean*—cleanly cut, cleanly played, music with soul cleaned up for dancers without it.

At the outset, disco was in truth unpredicted, unpredictable. The surprising popularity in 1973 of Manu Dibango's "Soul Makossa," a steamy track originally cut for a Paris record company, inaugurated disco's run on the pop charts. An off-the-wall AM hit by an African artist, the record first became popular as an import in New York City discos. Other AM hits born in the discos followed. They varied widely in sound and approach. Some, like "Soul Makossa," were virtual novelties, some were rhythm and blues records produced by previously obscure American labels, some were European productions with all the flamboyance of alarm clocks on parade. Yet even dreadful confections like "Fly Robbin Fly" by the Silver Convention proved that the deejays in the discos could launch million-sellers.

It was precisely the initial unpredictability of this new game that made disco so crucial, especially for black music in this decade. Before disco, the accepted route for "breaking" a hit was through the AM radio stations—and by 1973, black artists, with the exception of Roberta Flack and her ilk, found themselves largely confined to urban rhythm and blues outlets, as white consumers stopped buying southern soul, and Motown declined in productivity and popularity. But the discos opened up a new avenue for breaking black records, one that was not yet integrated into the corporate machinery of the big labels, one that was largely controlled by outsiders, by blacks, latinos and gays. Through this new point of entry into the media, dance music, some of it unusually raw, began to make its way onto top 40 radio playlists. Some of the most memorable disco oneshots date from this period: records like "Rock Your Baby" by George McCrae, a Latin feel track with a haunting echoed falsetto lead vocal, and "Shame Shame Shame" by Shirley and Company, a record with an irresistible groove and frenzied gospel shouting from Shirley (once one-half of Shirley and Lee, the duo that made "Let the Good Times Roll," a rock 'n' roll hit in 1957).

The scene changed, slowly at first. Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons got new life from a disco sound. So did the Bee Gees, who came up with the disco-styled "Jive Talkin'" in 1975 while floundering around for a marketable sound to replace the Beatle imitations they had once banked on. During the summer of 1976, K. C. and the Sunshine Band dominated airwaves with "Get Down Tonight," a singsong white-faced jingle launched with a crack black funk band from Miami. Disco was beginning to scramble the race line.

Throughout this period, disco was often dismissed by my friends as monotonous—"monotony" being an acceptable way to express lack of interest in the rhythmic elements that define the best disco as a music of Afro-American descent. If by 1977 disco had scrambled the race line, it had not yet dissolved the subtle racial fear that blocks any sustained recognition of the glorious if ambiguous miscegenation that has given birth to so much that is distinctively American in popular music. In other words, disco had yet to be made safe for middle America.

That was accomplished by *Saturday Night Fever*. In an inspired move, the dancing hero played by John Travolta was linked, not with gays or blacks or even the motive of mere escapism, but rather with an inchoate longing for upward mobility. Just as Travolta's macho swagger came to typify a lifestyle that previously had been associated with a new pride and public conviviality within the gay community, the Bee Gees's honeyed falsettos helped to sweeten the sound of a dance music previously tied closely to black rhythm and blues.

If the music constituted much of the movie's aura, the film in turn gave to the Bee Gees's songs the kind of archetypal motifs conspicuously lacking in most of their other work. "Staying Alive" perfectly crystallizes the desperation behind the peacock strut of the Travolta character, while "How Deep is Your Love" sounds right for the otherwise jarring affirmation of midtown respectability that closes the movie. Moreover, the film and the music both manage to sentimentalize urban toughness. For

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anyone who misses the street-wise but vulnerable punks once portrayed by the Four Seasons in such songs as "Walk Like a Man," "Staying Alive" should fill the bill: like Frankie Valli, the Bee Gees know how to evoke the lovable wimp within The Man.

Having had the dancing life safely stereotyped for them in *Saturday Night Fever*, middle America was at last primed for disco. Originally the site of a symbiotic relationship between an active audience and the music they defined themselves through, disco in the hinterlands has become a franchised forum exploiting the market for fast sex, the heir to that great American institution, the singles bar.

The music itself can no longer be considered very unpredictable. Most contemporary disco hews fairly closely to a fixed set of conventions, although the family of clichés used on any given track is fairly flexible. One thing, however, never varies: at least one percussion instrument must keep unswerving straight time. In the early days of disco, this role was usually assigned to the hi-hat cymbal. Today the bass drum often does the job, although handclapping can serve as well. Over this dependable—yes, monotonous—rhythmic base, the producer will layer optional percussive garnishes, mixing in exotic sounds to maximize the element of subtle surprise. Although the drummer plays conservatively, disco glories in Latin accents, a flourish of timbales here, a barrage of whistles there, all to generate a splashy sense of forward momentum. The orchestration often merely extends these percussive garnishes. Synthesizers bubble and swirl, strings sway and swoop, giving a veneer of spacey glamour to the proceedings—sonic dreams of Busby Berkeley. The ultra-clean recording techniques favored by the preeminent disco producers (Giorgio Moroder, Cerrone, Freddie Perren, Gamble and Huff) are intended finally to create "sensurround" pop, a penetrating music that will overwhelm an audience of dancers.

Rarely innovative, disco is nonetheless a craft that requires cleverness on the part of the producer and songwriter, competence on the part of the vocalists, and commitment on the part of the rhythm section. Certainly you can fake the funk—and much of the currently popular European disco does just that—but then you don't make very memorable dance music. Without the groove, it's a drag.

Freddie Perren's production of the Tavares's "Heaven Must Be Missing an Angel," a hit in 1976, gives a fair idea of how some disco has refined and extended the conventions of Motown and Philadelphia soul. The first thing to note about this record is its length: at almost seven minutes, it is twice as long as the classic Motown singles. The record opens in a celestial swirl of harps that reappear periodically in an arrangement swarming with legato trills by string orchestra and flutes, sweeping piano and celeste arpeggios, a cheerfully pounding xylophone, and even a small but stately French horn section. Building from a straight-time bass drum part with rock-steady cymbal accents, the rhythm section features a bongo, a cow bell, and a repeated figure for keyboard, electric guitar and electric bass, sometimes joined by pizzacato violins, or, for a less delicate emphasis, by saxophones. From the first bar, the rhythm section takes command of the music with the kind of contagious authority that virtually compels the listener to respond. The vocal arrangement, by contrast, is relatively baroque, with different voicings every chorus, enlisting the full range of the five singers in the Tavares. Best of all, the song is filled with preposterous orchestral touches that amplify the absurdity of the lyrics: the good humor of the arrangement makes the kinetic energy of the rhythm section all the more irresistible.

Since most disco by design is trifling, critics have suggested that it is incapable of supporting a serious statement. That it can do more is proved by Donna Summer's *Once Upon a Time*, in many respects the most impressive album of disco thus far released. Like the Who's *Tommy*, it contains a linked set of songs that tell a story; since Peter Townshend called *Tommy* a "rock opera," I suppose that makes *Once Upon A Time* a disco oratorio. A Cinderella reread, the album's plot replaces glass slippers with dancing shoes, pumpkin metamorphoses with "working the midnight shift." There is bitterness and irony as well as celebration in Summer's story. Dancing may supply a "fairy tale high," but on the disco circuit, romance means a string of one-night stands. Cinderella wins her freedom, but only at the price of surrendering her body. In the apt

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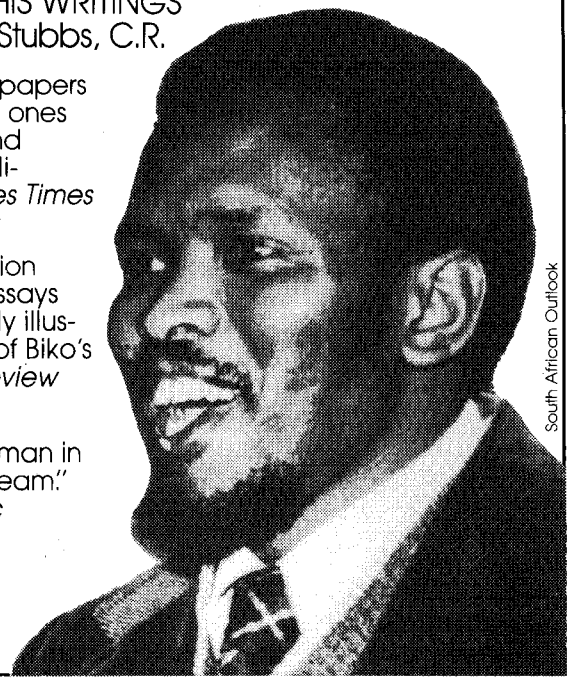
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words of "Faster and Faster to Nowhere," "It's a nightmare, daymare, it's a badmare no matter which way mare." Now that's pop poetry. It's also a sharper look at the culture of disco than many more articulate defenders have allowed themselves.

So much, then, for the argument that "disco clones" can't think past the next drumbeat. On the other hand, as the industry rationalizes itself, and gears its new product to grow apace with its audience, much disco will inevitably become increasingly bland. The process has already begun with performers like Gino Soccio, a Montreal producer currently popular in the discos. Decorated with synthetic panache and paced by a tireless metronome beat untouched by human hands, Soccio's *Outline* is chillingly fleshless music fit for mannikins. But in the whirl of fashion, alienation can be fun, anonymity a pretext for free-spirited role-playing. So what else is new?

In this situation, it will be interesting to see how producers and musicians respond to the calculations of executives and promoters. Vince Alletti, a vice president in the disco division at Warner Brothers records and a man who knows this music as well as anyone, has posed the commercial requirements squarely:

Disco is a very functional music. It needs a consistent beat and it needs to keep you excited, but there's also the message, which might not seem important to people outside. The message must be positive. Deejays won't play it otherwise. Disco is positive, it's about love and good feelings; it even gets a little snappy sometimes, but it's a very positive energy. At its best, it's ecstatic.

So much for the nattering nabobs of negativism. Upbeat tunes for a downbeat era, disco is indeed "the music of our times," as Ray Caviano, president of Warner's disco division, has claimed: "In the '60s, people were concerned with the war and so on, they were thinking everything out, they wanted music to entertain their heads. But this is peacetime, it's a whole new ball of wax."

If punk and new wave rock are the negative culture of pop music today, disco is its campy affirmative, a fashionable walk on the sunny side, effervescent muzak to ease you through everyday chores and to help you dance your troubles away. Easy listening with a beat, mood music for upwardly mobile adrenaline junkies, it is "the music that gets you up and keeps you going," as my local disco station plugs its fare. In American pop right now, it is the vital pulse of what's happening. For some black musicians, it is a better way to make a living. For lapsed hippies and jetsetters anxious about aging, it is a comforting way to pretend you can stay young by staying in step with changing fashions. Yes, "it's a whole new ball of wax"—and yes, it has already produced some great pop music. But for my generation, self-satisfied to have survived the 1960s and eager to escape the 1980s, the broader disco culture is also a hustle, a game, a mildly diverting new form of conspicuous consumption. "The music of our time" tells no lies—even as the limits we flee continue to press in.

A Continent Astray: Europe 1970-1978
by Walter Laqueur
(Oxford University Press; $15)

Europe Between the Superpowers: The Enduring Balance
by A. W. DePorte
(Yale University Press; $18.50)

It is difficult to imagine two more different books on the same (or almost the same) subject: contemporary Western Europe. Walter Laqueur, returning to a study of the European scene after his recent learned and informative excursions into guerrillas and terrorism, deals with "a continent astray" since 1970. A. W. DePorte, a State Department official who is also a scholar, the author of a fine book on de Gaulle's foreign policy in 1944-46, analyzes how the division of Europe after the second World War produced an "enduring balance." Laqueur is fashionably pessimistic, looks at the Europeans with a kind of paternal worry, and diagnoses their multiple crises as a cool clinician. DePorte is resolutely optimistic, finds stability where Laqueur sees signs of rot. He concludes that despite all the troubles, twists and turns, the postwar fate of Western Europe is just about the least bad of all the conceivable ones.

Laqueur acknowledges that less than 10 years ago he had written: "The European age has only begun." Now, he finds neuroses, squabbles, splits and above all "abulia"—lack of will. "Most of the weaknesses of Europe," he writes, "are self-inflicted." DePorte would disagree: he too notes the absence of a common will to power, the fading of the drive toward real integration, the failure of the Gaullist "long-range campaign of European consciousness-raising." But he shows that many of the West European weaknesses can be explained by Europe's position in a bipolar world, by the existence and resilience of a Euro-Atlantic system dominated by the United States and managed by multiple institutions which inevitably reduce the incentives the West Europeans have to create a separate entity of their own—given the need this entity would have to cooperate widely with the US anyhow.

Laqueur is quite ambivalent about his subject. "The next chapter in European history will probably not be a pleasant one, but nor will it be the last." There is fragmentation, "narrow-minded nationalism," a crisis of democracy, but no need to give up hope. One reason for this hesitation may well be the author's failure to go deep enough in his analysis of the European malaise. He gives us a survey of economic trends, of European politics and political forces (communism—he is deeply skeptical of its "Euro" variety, socialism, and the new regional nationalisms), of the evolution of detente in the years of the Ostpolitik and the Helsinki conference, and of Northern Europe (in a rather nasty chapter called Finlandization). He sees far more signs of the latter—of Western Europe's willingness to appease Soviet Russia—than is justified, in my opinion, either by the record of West European governments, or by the fiercely anti-Soviet turn of intellectual opinion under the impact of Solzhenitsyn. But while his survey is com-

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prehensive, and the running commentary displays Laqueur's range and sophistication, he does not distinguish clearly enough two very different levels of problems.

One is, indeed, peculiarly West European, but it certainly did not begin in the 1970s. It is the lack of common resolve and policy, the willingness to leave most of the big decisions about war and peace to the superpowers, a certain comfortable resignation to economic prosperity *cum* political and military dependence, and a tendency for each of the nations to cultivate its own garden, to concentrate on its own internal idiosyncracies: a combination of state sovereignty preserved and of decline of substance, which explains the rise of mini-"ethnic" nationalisms in states that keep their forms but lose their functions. This set of problems results from Western Europe's geopolitical history and fate, from its situation in the international system that DePorte describes. De Gaulle's challenge was both an attempt to revive a sense of pride and purpose in Europe—a reaction against "abulia"—*and* a manifestation of the European crisis, insofar as he led his battle only on behalf of France, was deeply suspicious of supranational integration, and therefore antagonized the very partners he needed to win his fight.

A second series of problems appears in the 1970s as a result of the mix of recession and inflation, of the drastic decline in economic growth and of the energy crisis. But these problems are not peculiar to Western Europe. Liberal industrial societies have all experienced an economic and political crisis. Can they once more meet the expectations of their people, and return to growth without high inflation? Can they cope with the apparent collapse of the assumptions behind the welfare state? Or with the Keynesian assumptions about economic management, at a time when declining growth and, often also, a shrinking industrial base, fail to produce enough wealth to support huge welfare payments, and when the public, feeling overtaxed and overregulated, rebels against government spending and intervention? What happens when the values that had made (to use Raymond Aron's terms) democracy and "economism" (i.e. the laws of the capitalist system) compatible—deference, the deferment of consumption, and the institutions of social control that kept individualism in check—lose their authority? How can one overcome the crisis of the liberal representation system—the decline of parliamentary institutions faced with problems too big and complex for legislatures, the rise of bureaucracy and pressure groups, often intertwined in what is sometimes labeled neo-corporatism, and resulting in a mix of immobility and fragmentation? Laqueur deals with the manifestations of these problems, but he fails to note that they affect all the nations of the Atlantic System, and quite specifically the United States. The reader who looks for a sharp analysis of their scope and effects—if not for a solution—would do well to turn to Raymond Aron's newly translated *In Defense of Decadent Europe* (Regnery/Gateway, Inc.). To sum up: insofar as the European malaise is recent, it isn't just European; insofar as it is European, it is much older than the crisis of the 1970s.

The great merit of DePorte's book is to put "the postwar European state system in perspective." This is doubly refreshing: first, because he quite rightly goes back to the balance-of-power system of the 19th century, and shows how the post-World War II partition of Europe resolved the major crisis provoked by the rise of Germany, a power too strong to be contained within the European state system. Second, because DePorte is so skillful at showing how much has been accomplished in the West, and at proving that the real surprise is not that the glass of European integration and of Atlantic Community is half-empty (how could it be otherwise, given the diversity of conditions and interests?), but that it is half-full and has remained half-full through all the postwar storms.

Europe Between the Superpowers is a superb work of historical and political analysis by a man of remarkably balanced and lucid judgment. Among its many strengths, I would list his analysis of the interwar system: "The basic power facts in Europe would have made it more and more difficult for German power to be contained even if Hitler had never come to power"; his view that a success of the plot against Hitler in July 1944, followed by "a negotiated peace which left intact a still-united German state" would have led to "an assertive, powerful and by no means acquiescent Germany"; his statement of the difference between Hitler and the Soviets: "Hitler thought that he was working with destiny because of the might of the present German state; the Soviet Communists believed that history was on their side whatever the immediate constellation of power in the world. Very different policies followed from those beliefs"; I would also single out his splendid account of the origins of the cold war, which cuts through mountains of hypotheses and speculations and delivers eminently sensible assessments of American and Soviet policies: "the West continues to find it not only disquieting, which is natural, but odd, which is less understandable, that the co-victor of World War II asserts global interests and, far behind the United States, has gradually developed a global reach."

DePorte also gives us a trenchant critique of George Kennan's famous "Mr. X" article: "Even Kennan's approach, though much more analytical than Truman's, aimed in the long term to alter the nature, and not just contain the power, of the Soviet regime." He thus sides with Walter Lippmann's critique of Kennan. But his main theme is that the solution to the cold war that Lippmann suggested in 1947, and Kennan himself came around to in 1957—a negotiation leading to a united, neutralized Germany, and to the withdrawal of the superpowers' forces from Europe—had no chance of success because the status quo—the division of Europe, which was the unplanned outcome of the Soviet-American rivalry—appeared preferable to all the

Israel Shenker

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main actors. So much so, that it has survived a long series of challenges whose rise and fall DePorte reviews. "The European system proved too rigid for either superpower to change because it was too satisfactory for too many of its participants as compared to the alternatives they considered feasible." DePorte rightly points out the continuing wisdom of the Federal Republic's policy of integration with the West—a policy based on acceptance of division and of various restraints on Germany power. And he, again, cuts through huge amounts of literature (and nonsense) in dealing with strategic issues: if the Europeans haven't developed a defense entity of their own, it is because of "a kind of 'law' . . . by which . . . most Europeans in times of crisis have clung to the protection offered by the United States, whatever doubts they had about it, while in times of relaxation they have more or less forgotten about such deep issues." As for the Americans, they have often provoked unnecessary intra-alliance tensions by attempting to appease their allies' fears with shifts in strategic doctrine that both increased their anxieties and underestimated "the degree to which European dependence on the US security guarantee was so deep-seated . . . as to be proof against the alliance deficiencies which vexed the Americans so much." And as noted above, DePorte is right again in showing that one of the reasons for the waning of the impetus toward West European integration—so fervently desired by many American statesmen—was the existence of the Atlantic System itself: "the Atlantic Europe which [American policy-makers] themselves had created." De Gaulle's own effort at creating a "European Europe" is analyzed by DePorte with extraordinary lucidity and finesse.

While Laqueur ends his book with a mixture of gloom and hope, DePorte concludes that the likely disturbances—many of which will be "like earlier ones," but some of which may be new—"will have to contend against the hard factors which have maintained the structural stability of the European state system against the many serious challenges of the last quarter-century," and which give it "a strong lease on the future." He may be accused of complacency by two kinds of critics. Some believe that the Soviet threat—because of military superiority, or through "Finlandization"—creates a totally new and deeply unsettling situation for the West. I remain skeptical about the Soviet willingness to risk a global war, or ability to believe that a war could remain limited in a continent stuffed with nuclear weapons, and I remain confident in the West Europeans' determination to preserve their systems. Finlandization is an awful word, because the Finns' choice was between being "finlandized" and being "polonized"—and, Laqueur's severity toward Finland notwithstanding, they behaved so as to avoid polonization. For the West European, the choice is between independence within the Atlantic system, and Finlandization: the situations are just not comparable.

The other possible critics of DePorte are European "nationalists," whether Gaullist or integrationist: men and women for whom resignation to the division of Europe, and to prosperity for its Western half within an Atlantic zone in which the Europeans are junior partners with limited horizons, is an unsavory proposition, a disgraceful loss of leadership and pride. DePorte understands this reaction; while his own judgment that "the Europeans have adapted with much intelligence to the postwar world in which they found themselves" is no consolation to these critics, the merit of his analysis is to help us understand why "Europe should have suffered this loss," against what obstacles the dream of European resurgence has to fight, and why, within Europe, the contest between "the heroes of the quest" and "their brothers who learn how to survive" is likely to persist—to the advantage of the latter.

Stanley Hoffmann

Stanley Hoffman is a professor of government at Harvard University and author, most recently, of *Primacy or World Order: American Foreign Policy Since the Cold War* (McGraw-Hill).

Groucho
by Hector Arce

(Putnam's; $10)

I knew Groucho—or I should say, one of the Grouchos—and the one I had only heard about but didn't know is frankly revealed here in unsparing and sometimes pathetic detail. In what is likely to be the best book we will get on Groucho, Hector Arce explains the apparently irreconcilable feelings Groucho inspired, ranging from undiluted affection (in my case) to loathing (a former writer's). Arce has managed to combine the career and the private life in a skillful manner. Relatives, in-laws, and some erstwhile friends are all given their chance to badmouth Groucho—seldom unjustifiably, I fear—and we emerge from the book with perhaps as complete a picture of the life of a genius-neurotic comic giant as it is possible to produce. Arce intrudes, necessarily, in ways that bring us right into the great man's home and bedroom. It is difficult not to wince at times, but the author's obvious affection for his subject prevents any sense of exploitation or cash-conscious betrayal of privacy or confidence.

Groucho the wit and comic was a masterpiece of nature; a performer equipped with perhaps the most formidable array of gifts ever bestowed on an individual funny man. Fortunately, fewer people knew the impossible husband, the wounding father and the lonely depressive who, in a particularly touching instance, walked his dog past a neighbor's house repeatedly, in hopes of being invited inside for dinner and company.

If, as Diana Trilling once speculated in an essay on Marilyn Monroe, there is a law of negative compensation at work in the world—a law that the greatly gifted must suffer agonies proportionate to their talents—Groucho was its victim. Whatever finely tuned mental and psychological mechanism made possible the lightning wit, the extraordinarily intelligent and complex verbal play, the genius selection of instant wording, phrasing, and inflection went along—as if the gods were jealous—with an incapacity to find any sort of longterm emotional contentment with his wives and children. If he did love them—and I am convinced he did—then something

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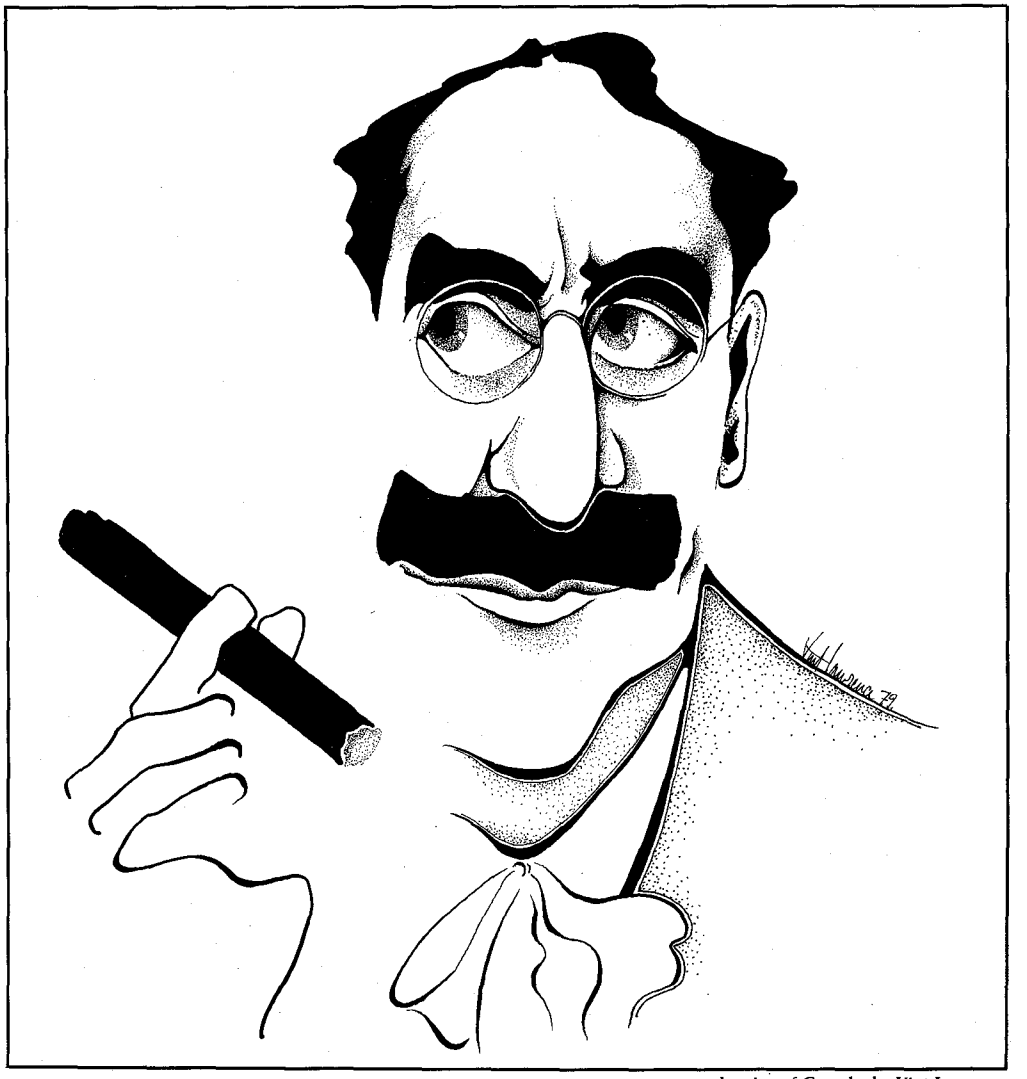
prevented him from doing them more good than harm. Groucho's wives are more to be pitied than censured. The pathetic Kay trying to give a party for Groucho's fancy friends and having her little games and favors brutally scorned and ridiculed is almost unbearable to read about. It should have been a Dorothy Parker short story. Arce shows us Groucho's sad sexual dysfunction and also his ability to write hilariously about it to close friends—a paradigm for the twin-mask quality of his hectic personal life.

Much of Groucho's destiny had to do with the predatory mother who launched her sons willy-nilly into show biz. Groucho was the first of her babies to be clearly and displeasingly Jewish-looking; too much so for the hair-bleaching jobs done on Harpo and Chico to help. Thus he failed to please the first woman in his life. The childhood in Yorkville, the Broadway shows, the noble and put-upon Margaret Dumont, Groucho's role in the talent-grabbing machinations of the networks, his passion for Gilbert and Sullivan, the feckless Chico's ruinous gambling, the saintly Harpo who in contrast to his brother was apparently incapable of inspiring any emotion but love in the most casual acquaintance—all this and more make for fascinating reading.



drawing of Groucho by Vint Lawrence

Arce points out that Groucho had the wisdom to age publicly while his brothers' attempts to preserve their elfin screen personalities ill became their years. Still, the fact that Groucho's brilliant career flickered and nearly guttered out more than once gives me pause. Luckily, the quiz show "You Bet Your Life" brought him back from a brush with obscurity to dazzling popularity and wealth. Another dip, and the campus throngs that lined up to see the brothers' films in the 1960s brought a third wave of adulation.

One of Arce's interesting points is that younger discoverers of the brothers and Groucho cannot imagine the impact the films originally had when they first came out. Derivative "wild" comedy makes them seem less revolutionary today, but my father confirms that when *Coconuts* first landed on Grand Island, Nebraska, those who found themselves rolling in the aisles hardly knew what hit them. By contrast, I first saw Groucho on the quiz show, *then* discovered the films, which, by the time I met Groucho, had a cult following among the young that he was just beginning to discover and about which he wanted constant reassurance. He particularly needed this adoration of the young. He once said to me, "I get along with *these* kids . . ." and failed to finish the sentence. Arce's book fills in the rest.

One's heart goes out to Groucho's older daughter, Miriam, whose sad early life reflects her father's individualism and wit but none of the rewards. Once when asked why she couldn't behave more like another kid (who, incidentally, happened to stammer), to her everlasting credit the fractious Miriam replied "I'll s-s-s-s-start r-r-r-r-right n-n-n-n-now." Wherever you are, Miriam, I love you for that.

Perhaps the nature-nurture controversy could be settled for all time if the gifted and nerve-wracked Miriam could somehow miraculously be raised all over again in the loving atmosphere of Harpo's home. After reported bouts with booze, drugs and Menninger's, the ever-astute Miriam uttered the chilling observation: "I do everything to fulfill my father's feelings about women. He hates them, and I prove him right."

Throughout all the self-doubts and catastrophic marriages, Groucho's work remained curiously unaffected by the strife at home. Perhaps the desire to escape into work sharpened his performance and took his mind off the custody fights and his ability to turn wives into drunks and children into enemies. In any case, the Groucho wit survives all adversity and brightens this book. Visiting a loyal friend in the hospital, always a difficult chore for the aged Groucho, Groucho says as the elevator door closes, "Men's tonsils, please." A single example from the book reminds us (lest we forget) of what a high order of wit Groucho had at his best. A director, Sam Wood, and Groucho were not mutual admirers. One day on the movie set, an exasperated Wood snapped, "You can't make an actor out of clay." Groucho: "Nor a director out of Wood." Steve Soliar, who worked with

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Groucho as an archivist near the end, told me that at one point when vital signs were low, a nurse appeared with a thermometer: "What do you want?" "We have to see if you have a temperature, Mr. Marx." "Don't be silly," said the barely audible figure in bed, "everybody has a temperature." That may have been his last joke.

As one who appears in the book, I find it hard to be objective about some of it. It is safe to say that I am more moved at learning that Groucho called friends to urge them to watch my early TV appearances than most readers will be. (I can imagine saying to Groucho, "How will this strike the average reader?" and his answering, "The average reader *deserves* to be struck.")

Part of the attentive reviewer's duty is to find a few mistakes. I was amused to note that as one of an excessive number of sloppy proofreading errors, Woody Allen co-authored my autobiography. How the sentence, "Minnie was torn by the First World War, not knowing where her allegiances should lay," got past the author, the editor *and* the proofreader is anybody's guess. And the misuse of "shibboleth" is rapidly becoming the shibboleth of the otherwise literate. So much for carping.

The reader will have to look elsewhere or decide for himself the verdict on Erin Fleming, the vivacious and ambitious young woman who came into Groucho's life in his later years. I am so close to the forest as to be almost one of the trees. Many of the adjectives applied to her, beginning with "exasperating" and ending with "impossible," could also be applied to him. For better or worse, and despite the humiliating financial squabble as the curtain descended on Groucho's life and career, she brought a near-dead man back to life repeatedly, even if she seemed to risk killing him in the process.

For my part, I hope there is some kind of eternal peace being enjoyed by the man who should have our eternal gratitude for having lived in our time; who imagined the Stamp Act of 1776 as two fellows who came onstage, stamped their feet, and finished with a song; or who could say to an operator, as I heard him do, "Extension 4-8-2 eh? 4-8-2. Sounds like a cannibal story." Such a man deserved flights of angels to sing him to his rest. For his sake, I hope they sang *The Mikado*.

Dick Cavett

Dick Cavett currently hosts "The Dick Cavett Show" on Public Broadcasting and is the co-author, with Christopher Porterfield, of *Cavett* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).

The Oresteia of Aeschylus by Robert Lowell

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $8.95)

Greek poetry was born in the similes of Homer, and reached its maturity—and surprising modernity—in the metaphors of Pindar and Aeschylus. This may not be obvious to those who have only read their classics in English translation. Homer's style seems to pose no problem for the translators, all of whom faithfully describe Achilles charging the Trojans "like inhuman fire." But for some unfathomable reason they balk at translating even the simplest of Greek metaphors. This is without justification either ancient or modern. To Aristotle, mastery of metaphor was the acme of art. And do we not live in an age when fog regularly comes in on little cat feet?

This inexplicable uneasiness in the presence of metaphor has at times even affected our finest translator from the Greek, Richmond Lattimore. In *Pythian 8*, Pindar speaks of man being *skias onar*, "the dream of a shadow." But in Lattimore he becomes "the shadow of a dream," a less powerful image of the ethereal, ephemeral quality of human life. More to the point, it is not what Pindar actually said. Such lapses are rare in Lattimore; in most versions they are rife.

According to Aeschylus, Prometheus stole for man *anthos pyros*, "the blossom of fire." Yet the flower has been plucked in at least half the translations I have checked. Admittedly, Aeschylean style can at times be purple-patched. But the translator's task is not to sit in judgment. He should render what he sees and allow the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Given the "metaphoraphobia" just described, Aeschylus has been an astonishing lodestone for poet-translators. Twenty years ago, a critic counted over 60 English versions of the *Agamemnon*, including one by Dryden with music by Purcell, and dozens more have been published in the interim. Yet there has never really been a version which has moved readers to "look at each other with a wild surmise/Silent, upon a peak in Darien." Still, Aeschylus continues to attract translators the way a Himalayan peak draws climbers to its most dangerous face. He is tall and majestic; the closer one gets the more frightening the task appears. If Scott, Tennyson and Shelley could try, why not Lowell?

This question is more than rhetorical. No critic denies Lowell a place beside the best poets of our age. Some even consider him an important playwright. But over his translations the John Simons pour out a veritable Hudson of philological contempt. Homer may be allowed to nod, but Lowell must be forbidden to translate. Perhaps, in a half century, Lowell's *Imitations* (1961) will be granted the same critical tolerance now accorded Pound's *Propertius*. Surely when any artist attempts to translate into English works ranging from Homer to Montale, there are bound to be infelicities. There are even likely to be felicities. Lowell was, in fact, a fairly good linguist, if no polyglot, and his *Phaedra* is as good a version as anyone is likely to produce in English. Curiously enough, when Louis Simpson praised the work, his one criticism was that Lowell's language was a bit too rugged for Racine, too much like Aeschylus.

Though he had written the first two-thirds of his *Oresteia* in the 1960s, Lowell was still working on the final portion when he died. His purpose, put forth in the brief preface, was to produce an acting version "to trim, cut, and be direct enough to satisfy my own mind and at a first hearing the simple ears of a theater audience." He did not work from the Greek (though he had studied the language), but instead used as his model Richmond Lattimore's "elaborately exact" translation. This was a crucial error, even though Lattimore himself has praised the new version. When Lowell "imitated" Russian poetry his raw

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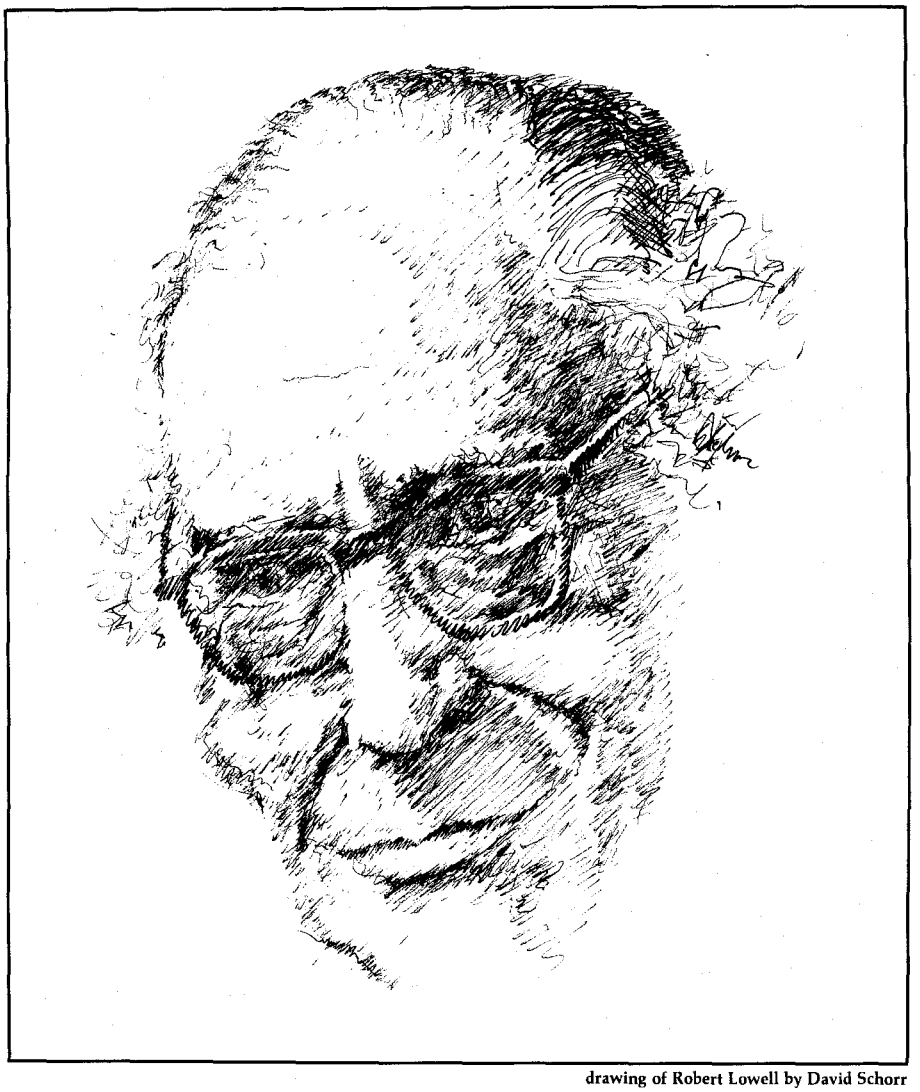

drawing of Robert Lowell by David Schorr

material was a literal trot. But it is Lattimore's particular genius that his precision is also poetic. Lowell left himself little room to operate.

The language of Aeschylus is dense and difficult, full of striking word coinages which, even if literally rendered, can evoke a frisson in the modern reader. (Critics still argue about whether the Greek audience could appreciate them at first hearing.) This would seem attractive to Lowell's own style. But his version is a deliberate stripping down of the poetic diction. Whereas Lattimore has both the courage and skill to render those Aeschylean metaphors, Lowell has systematically excised them. The result is a playable drama about Agamemnon, Clytemnestra and Orestes, but an oddly prosaic one. Lowell has produced a muted Lattimore, a literary curiosity like I. A. Richards's *Wrath of Achilles*.

In terms of scene construction and dialogue, Aeschylus was the least dramatic of the Greek tragedians, but he was the most poetic. Therefore, to remove the metaphors, as Lowell has, is to take the blossom from Prometheus's fire. Where is the voice of Lowell himself, aptly praised by Richard Howard as "igneous poetry"? A few specific examples will show us what has happened to both Lowell and Aeschylus.

The prologue of the *Oresteia* sets the mood for the entire trilogy. There is night in Argos, both moral and physical. An apprehensive Watchman scans the skies for the torch signal that will indicate that Troy has fallen. He is too frightened to speak of what has gone on in Agamemnon's palace while the king was at war. What disturbs him even more than the adulterous behavior of Aegisthus is the unseemly *masculine* behavior of Clytemnestra. She has acted with "male strength of heart" (Lattimore). In Lowell's version we have no inkling that the Watchman is worried about Clytemnestra at all. We only hear that "she has the mind of a man." Does this (actually an over-literal rendering of the Greek) convey anything to the modern reader? Do we understand that Clytemnestra is being accused of hubristic trespass into the domain of the superior sex? This basic theme of the entire trilogy has many ironic reverberations in its language. Thus when Clytemnestra realizes that vengeance is about to be wrought upon her, she fights back, crying "bring me quick, somebody, an axe to kill a man" (Lattimore). The Greek is very specific, indeed it might even be construed as a husband-killing weapon.

This verbal echo is typical of Aeschylus's style, which, like Virgil's, has an elaborate and consistent structure of imagery. Like the Roman poet, Aeschylus will sustain a metaphor over hundreds—and sometimes thousands—of lines. He has planned to conclude his trilogy with a torchlight parade, and from the earliest moment, his language prepares us for that final scene.

The preparation begins with the prologue. The Watchman is unable to sleep because, he says, his bed is *nuktiplagkton*, "stricken with night" (Lattimore). This strange compound adjective appears but four times in extant Greek literature—and all of them in this trilogy. Lowell has ignored what Aeschylus wished to emphasize. The impact of the play is inevitably weakened. For in Aeschylus, the metaphor is the message.

At another point, the Chorus speaks of the sacrifice of Iphigenia—which has given some justification to Clytemnestra's desire to murder Agamemnon. Lowell presents a tender picture of the young princess being lifted toward the altar: "she looked at her familiar killers . . . and sang with her weak, clear voice in honor of her father."

But once again, a crucial metaphor is missing. In the Greek, Iphigenia glances at her killers "with arrows of pity." While one should not demand slavish adherence to the text from a poet of Lowell's stature, one has to point out that he is undermining Aeschylus's carefully wrought imagery. For later in the play there is a deliberate echo of the innocent victim's pitiful arrows—when the playwright describes the arrival of Helen to Troy. Once again, the eyes of a woman shoot arrows, but this time they are soft (the adjective *malakos* even has a sensual connotation) and they strike eros into the hearts of all. Having ignored the first metaphor, Lowell also omits the second. A powerful irony is lost.

And yet now and then there are moments when Lowell is more Aeschylean than Lattimore. As, for example, when Orestes presents himself to Athena in the final part of the trilogy: "My father was Agamemnon, king of Argos,/ the king of men who

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captained the great fleet,/ and as your soldier crushed Troy/ to a citiless mound of dust. . . ." The Greek literally says that with Athena's help Agamemnon "uncitied the city" of Troy. Here Lowell is infinitely more poetic than Lattimore's "you made the Trojan city/ of Ilium no city any more."

Lowell has clearly consulted the Greek original on many occasions. In fact he has retranslated a line—with grammatical justification—which directly contradicts one of Lattimore's interpretations. In the second play, when Aegisthus is killed, Clytemnestra rushes onstage and asks what the commotion is. Lattimore's Chorus replies, "I tell you he is alive, and killing the dead." But Lowell prefers a second interpretation, which may legitimately be inferred from the ambiguous Greek indirect discourse: "the dead are killing the living." This seems more appropriate to a tragedy in which the ghosts of the past play so powerful a role.

The high point of Lowell's version is Orestes's revenge upon his mother. Here the translator is at his freest—and most dramatic. Even Pylades, Orestes's legendary friend, who has one of the most thankless roles in literature—for he must stand patiently through an entire play to speak but three lines—has, in Lowell's version, three better lines. When Orestes has a moment of Hamlet-like hesitation and asks his friend if he dare kill his own mother, Pylades replies: "Kill the killer of Agamemnon. Apollo/ has spoken. The gods guide you. Will/ you be hateful to the gods, as well as to man?" Lowell even improves Clytemnestra's argument as she pleads with Orestes for her life: "I had a loved daughter, Iphigenia./ Agamemnon took her from me and butchered her./ These deaths were determined by the gods, Orestes."

As he is about to kill her, she once again asks him to prove she deserves death. Orestes answers that she has acted basely for "a price."

Clytemnestra: What price?
Orestes: Argos and something I will not name that waits for you in the women's apartments.
Clytemnestra: Name Cassandra and your father's other pleasures.

None of this is in the Greek text, but it all was in the mind of the Greek audience. Lowell has translated the spirit of the murder by articulating the unspoken emotional undercurrents. He has also added to the drama with imaginative stage directions, and clarified some of the mythological allusions by glossing them within the dialogue. For example, "Zeus pardoned/ even Ixion, who killed his mother's father. . . ." And by dividing the speeches of the Chorus into various solo utterances, Lowell has eliminated the single most distracting element in modern performances of Greek drama: the garbled chanting, which often sounds like the responsive reading of a desultory church congregation.

The final play of the *Oresteia* trilogy has always posed a problem. The real action is over. Orestes is still haunted, but could really have been cured by Athena at the end of Part Two. In point of fact, there is no mythological material from which to weave yet another play. C. J. Herington is doubtless right in suggesting that the connected trilogy was Aeschylus's own innovation (we know of no other playwright who composed them) and that in each case, the third play is pure Aeschylean invention. Now there is nothing inherently wrong with cutting loose from the moorings of myth—Euripides is at his most fascinating when he does so. But Aeschylus seems to have used his "free" time purely for propaganda. The fragments suggest that Part Three of his

GLASS MUSIC

Herr von Mesmer, at whose house we lunched on Monday, played to us on Miss Davies' harmonica or glass instrument, and played very well. It cost him about 50 ducats and it is very beautifully made. He is the only person in Vienna who has learnt it and he possesses a much finer instrument than Miss Davies does. Wolfgang too has played upon it. How I should like to have one!

—Leopold Mozart, 1773

Imagine Mozart: his porcelain cheeks
gone paler still, those orbs of eye glazed, one lip
trembling like the score in his palm. He aches
with beauty, but the music will not stop
till it holds him as a god could, with one look,
then lets him drop. He yearns to offer up
a sweet piece of his own for what he heard
played on an instrument he couldn't afford.

Tender-eyed Anton Mesmer easily tires
of fame. To lull some people into a doze—
what science is in that, what skill? He wonders,
touching the rich instrument, what he does
to earn all this: the jewelled pendants, white chairs
light as if carved in heaven, the gleaming rows
of keys—like so many gifts. With a sigh
he picks one final toccata to play.

And Mozart? Mesmerized. Ghost-tones ring the room
as if it were a goblet, while his host thinks
of work, how it's all a kind of play—some
diddle pendulums, some scribble notes. Lank
as a trinket, the guest is dangling from
his dream: this music of the spheres. When it sinks
at Mesmer's touch to its deep, closing phrase,
Mozart can only thank him with his eyes.

Imagine the chain of gifts: Mozart's sweet art,
Mesmer's gaze, his instrument—the best
in all Vienna—its tones that seem to start
in heaven or nowhere . . . and behind this list
the fat inventor: Ben Franklin, in a shirt
soured with sweat, linking chain drives to shafts.
He pulls a crank, listens as glass music sifts
from air, this man who doesn't believe in gifts.

Don Bogen

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trilogies are always expressions of his politico-religious credo, the Solonic faith in world order, the perfectability of man and his institutions. Thus the *Oresteia*, his only complete extant trilogy, concludes with a celebration of Athens and its jury system. It is really a ploy on the author's part to curry favor with the judges of the dramatic festival.

As in most political rallies, fireworks help. So Aeschylus brings in a whole new chorus of torchbearers for the finale. It must have been a grand spectacle in the Theater of Dionysos especially if, as most scholars agree, the aging poet was granted the honor of presenting his work at the end of the day. Darkness would be growing, torches would be glowing—a graphic restatement of his theme that the light of justice had come at last to the night-stricken House of Atreus. It is spectacular theater.

But Lowell gives us no torches. Mercifully, however, he does pare down the propaganda, since it is hardly palatable to a modern audience. Orestes is absolved because, as the Greeks believed (and Athena agreed), a woman is less important than a man, and therefore killing a mother is less horrendous than killing a father. If this seems barbaric, let us not forget that over a century later Aristotle was still making the same value judgments. One might have expected a man like Lowell to "improve" *this* part of the *Oresteia*.

And perhaps he would have, had he lived. We must always bear in mind that his Third Part was a draft, and that he never saw any of the work staged. He would surely have sharpened it, and removed some of the infelicities (like "pray for the morning, Electra").

Lowell nowhere tells us why he was drawn to the *Oresteia*. I would doubt that it was merely as a translator's challenge. The fact that he also wrote a Prometheus demonstrates how much he shares with Aeschylus a deep concern for justice—social, if not cosmic. This explains a great deal, and makes literary pronouncements somewhat peripheral. Nobility of soul is more important than metaphors.

Erich Segal

Erich Segal teaches at Dartmouth and Wolfson College, Oxford.

Confessions of a Muckraker by Jack Anderson and James Boyd

(Random House; $12.95)

Every so often in this wonderful book, Jack Anderson tries to put some distance between himself and the man he is writing about, the late Drew Pearson, for whom he worked for 22 years. These odd paragraphs usually come at the end of some enthralling tale about how he and Drew "got their man," whether it be Joe McCarthy or Parnell Thomas or another of their famous targets. The stories themselves give one the sense that Anderson liked his life with Pearson, but the afterthoughts convey something else: that Anderson's identification with Pearson was never so strong nor his admiration so boundless as to blind him to Pearson's flaws.

"I tended to look on journalism as a craft to be learned, a discipline whose rules circumscribed and shaped one's approach to public disputes, a vocation to excel in," he writes in one of these asides.

> *Drew, however, for all the art, fire, and ingenuity he brought to journalism, saw it as essentially a tool for the advancement of larger causes. His columns and broadcasts were to him weapons in a just war, with truth as their only acknowledged restriction—and truth was often a subjective matter. . . . I contented myself with making mental lists of abuses to be shunned in the remote future when I would be on my own: no Ahab-like pursuit of adversaries; no rehashes of old charges unless justified by a fresh discovery or a special circumstance; no prejudicial symbols or tendentious parallels to bolster up a story that couldn't stand on its own; no ideological excursions or propaganda; no behind-the-scenes machinations with the political rivals of one's target. Just the spare, hard exposé.*

This September will mark the 10th anniversary of Pearson's death, and will mark as well the decade Jack Anderson has been writing the "Washington Merry-Go-Round" column that Pearson founded and ran for 37 years. During the time the column was in his hands, Pearson was a unique and powerful force in Washington, and undoubtedly part of the reason had to do with Pearson's having cornered the market on muckraking. That wasn't a particularly difficult thing to do; for most of his life, journalism was a timid profession. Stories weren't broken unless Pearson broke them.

Jack Anderson hasn't been as lucky. During his term at the helm of the "Merry-Go-Round" column, journalism has changed dramatically. Now he must compete with dozens of reporters on newspapers all over the country for scoops—and he does not come off well by comparison. The resources of a major newspaper energetically engaged in uncovering scandal far outstrip his own, and so, for that matter, does the talent. As a result, it's become part of the conventional wisdom in Washington to shrug off Jack Anderson, to see him as an anachronism, outhustled and outscooped by the big boys. *Confessions of a Muckraker* serves as a powerful reminder that it wasn't always so.

There is the tale, for example, of how he first found out that Sherman Adams, Ike's right-hand man, was in up to his ears with a sleazy textile manufacturer, and how the column broke the story, eventually forcing Adams to resign. It's a great story, centering around Anderson's efforts to con his source into turning over the incriminating documents to him before Clark Mollenhoff of the *Des Moines Register* got his hands on them. Eventually our hero wins the day, but not before he's had to enlist Senator Wayne Morse and his source's wife in the scheme—and pulled more fast ones than most reporters pull in a lifetime.

This is not, however, a memoir of the chest-thumping, self-aggrandizing variety, and that's one of the things it has going for it. It is an honest book, disarmingly so, for which we can presumably thank co-author James Boyd, who has written it beautifully. Unlike the column, or other Anderson writings, the world in *Confessions* is not black and white. Oh, there is the usual assortment of pooh-bahs and fat-cats and muck-a-mucks, doing all those things pooh-bahs and fat-cats and muck-a-mucks invariably do, but in *Confessions* they are not all irredeemably evil, nor are the good guys in the

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Pearson camp all knights in shining armor. Along with the pride he takes in his triumphs, Anderson is also willing to admit his mistakes. Nowhere is this more in evidence than in his admission that he once leaked the name of a suspected Communist to Joe McCarthy.

Anderson and McCarthy arrived in Washington at about the same time—he the young naive muckraker, the other a green senator—and soon found themselves entwined in the kind of relationship that is common between a politician and a reporter. McCarthy was Anderson's best source, someone the reporter could turn to regularly for a column item, and as a result Anderson felt no compelling urgency to look for any dirt McCarthy may have left behind. How seductive it must have been to have a United States senator make phone calls to a colleague at Anderson's behest—and then let Anderson listen in on another line to get his scoop. And how perfectly natural that when the time came that McCarthy needed a favor, "the decision to help McCarthy was almost automatic. I'm sure I underwent none of the soul-searching that subsequent events would suggest was appropriate. For one thing, I owed him."

So, this still being early in McCarthy's Red-baiting days, and Anderson still feeling equivocal about whether McCarthy was doing the right thing or not, he dug up from the Pearson files the name of a presidential aide who had once joined a few communist fronts but about whom Pearson suspected (but couldn't prove) darker things. Then he watched from the press gallery, stunned, he says now, as McCarthy made all those darker accusations on the Senate floor without having any fuller set of facts. A lesson was learned, he writes now, both about the true character of McCarthy, and the limits a reporter should observe in his relationship with sources. The incident pushed him to go after McCarthy with all the fury Pearson expected of him, even to the extent of writing one of the first anti-McCarthy books, which was published at the height of McCarthyism.

The heart of this book, in fact, is Pearson's epic battle with McCarthy, a battle that shows Pearson at his best. Like his choice of "enemies," the decision to hound McCarthy in the column was not based on evidence of criminality, but on the fact that Pearson found his politics (and his tactics) repugnant. Pearson, the great propagandizer for liberalism, the greater meddler in affairs of state, never did a better job of propagandizing or meddling than in his battle against McCarthy. It cost him dearly (he lost his nationally syndicated radio broadcast as a result of the fight), but he never let up. Eventually, as was usually the case, it was not his journalism but his meddling that made the difference. After a Senate committee had drafted a report outlining some of the seamier aspects of McCarthy's finances, the committee members suddenly got cold feet. In particular one senator whose signature was crucial found it easier to drink himself into a stupor than to put his John Hancock to the report. Pearson coaxed him into sobriety after spending an inordinate length of time at his house, then strong-armed him into getting the signature of another weak-willed colleague by getting the second senator drunk. Years later, when McCarthy was finally censured, this report became the basis for the Senate's charges of financial shenanigans.

Of course, the vendettas, the politicking, the steady stream of columns, were used on dozens of politicians far less evil than McCarthy. Pearson was never one to hold back, something Anderson learned soon after he signed on, when Pearson, on a tip, testified against a nominee for the FCC, and then, after the testimony, asked Anderson to go prove what he had said. In other cases, what Pearson did seems to have been unjustifiable. Such an incident was his pursuit of James Forrestal, who was Roosevelt's secretary of the Navy and Truman's secretary of defense, and was, to Pearson, quite simply the most dangerous man in America, a right-winger of the worst sort. The chapter on Forrestal recounts Pearson's vendetta against him in all its admittedly slimy details ("In a war of attrition that had occasionally been marred by low blows, Pearson now descended to poison gas"), a vendetta in which Anderson played a crucial role as Pearson's legman, something that he now seems to regret quite a bit. In the end, of course, Forrestal cracked, committed suicide, and the large portion of the blame was placed squarely on Pearson.

It is at the end of this chapter on Forrestal that Anderson recites the list of reforms I quoted at the beginning. That and other paragraphs like it bother me. I can't help feeling that many of the lessons he learned from watching Pearson's excesses may have been the wrong ones. Sure, he has succeeded in stripping "Washington Merry-Go-Round" of its most blatant propagandizing, and has preached to his reporters that they must go after the "spare, hard exposé" no matter whose ideology it hurts. But, like Pearson, he still writes too often based more on instinct than fact, still unrelentingly hypes his product, still pounds away at a story, finding a dozen different ways to present the same set of facts. For the sake of a scoop, he can still damage careers with information that is not altogether accurate, or at least not altogether provable. With humor, grace and style, he has pointed out these flaws of Pearson's in *Confessions of a Muckraker*. But I can't help thinking that, in the end, Pearson's passion seems the better excuse.

Joseph Nocera

Joseph Nocera is an editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880 by Julie Roy Jeffrey

(Hill and Wang; $11.95, $5.95 paper)

Women and Men on the Overland Trail by John Mack Faragher

(Yale University Press; $17.50)

When Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his famous address, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," to a small group of scholars in 1893, he was simply putting the academic seal of approval on our longstanding national romance with frontier life. Well before Turner coined

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the phrase, "frontier individualism," the American imagination was populated with Davy Crocketts, Daniel Boones, Annie Oakleys and Belle Starrs—loners who rode hard, shot straight and lived free as the land they homesteaded.

But even though tall tales like these originated with the pioneers themselves, their diaries and letters show that frontier life was scarcely as liberating as Turner believed. Westward emigration was a family event. Except for the peak years of the gold rush, 1849-51, men and women moving west were not footloose loners, but husbands and wives looking for a fit place to raise a family. Between 1841 and 1967, 350,000 men, women and children traveled by wagon to California and Oregon. Sometimes the trail was so crowded that wagons spread out side by side for miles across the prairies to avoid the choking clouds of dust. Work was hard, food scarce and tempers short during the six-to-nine-month journey, but few emigrants actually starved, froze or died at the hands of Indians or irritable fellow travelers.

What kinds of people were these pioneers? Using many of the same letters and diaries as well as recent demographic studies, historians Julie Roy Jeffrey and John Mack Faragher have come up with startlingly different portraits of the pioneers—the pioneer women in particular. Both Jeffrey's *Frontier Women* and Faragher's *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* set out to debunk romantic notions of frontier life by taking a feminist perspective. But this point of departure is all they have in common.

According to Jeffrey, women on the overland trail shared with nearly all mid-19th-century American women a belief in what recent feminist historians have dubbed the "Cult of Domesticity" or "Cult of True Womanhood." Domesticity, as preached by easterners like Catherine Beecher and canonized in the popular *Godey's Lady's Book*, meant a great deal more than running an efficient kitchen. Beecher argued it was woman's duty to uphold the nation's moral standards by instructing her children and subtly influencing her husband's behavior. Education, religion and temperance were her causes and for a woman traveling to the lawless West, says Jeffrey, domesticity actually took on the dimensions of a "civilizing mission."

But high-minded convictions were just about all emigrant women had to keep them going at first; most did not share their husbands' or fathers' enthusiasm for the move west. Emigration meant leaving behind already established homes, churches and schools as well as close friends and family—virtually all the supports of domestic life. Departures recorded in diaries were nearly always tearful, for most women knew they could never come back. Even first entries like Amelia Knight's terse, "STARTED FROM HOME," says Jeffrey, convey the emotion of the scene. Entries covering the rest of the journey remained wistful and stoic as women found themselves increasingly lonely and overworked, often taking over traditionally male tasks. Most wives took their turn in driving the wagon; nearly all walked the 1600 miles along with their husbands to lighten the load, sometimes pushing the wagon up steep hills. Evenings, when men were off duty, wives still had to make camp, cook meals, serve and wash up under the most primitive conditions. It was hard to feel womanly when hunting buffalo dung for fuel in a tattered, dusty dress.

And the hard work didn't end with the journey west. Husbands depended on wives to help set up the new farm—carpentering, plowing, sowing, harvesting. In addition, many women hired themselves out as tailors or bakers or sold their own crops of vegetables, butter and eggs to support their families in the years before their husbands' larger crops began to pay off. It is not really surprising that most women felt relieved to return to a more circumscribed domestic sphere in following years, since that meant putting limits on seemingly endless chores and responsibilities.

But many women found themselves drawn into a lively battle with their menfolk just as other hardships began to lessen. The mining towns of California and Nevada, for example, were largely male populations full of overworked miners who liked to spend Sundays drinking, gambling and whoring. Even a group of Bible-toting missionaries from Boston gave in: "After only two days in the placer mines," writes Jeffrey, "all the Bibles were gone, not given away in hopes of reclaiming sinners, but exchanged in a Benicia bar for whiskey." Yet these same men counted on women to set better examples. And most women, says Jeffrey, considered that their duty. One Sonora, California wife was pleased that her walks to church on Sundays with husband and children inspired the men lounging on Main Street to rise and salute her as she passed. And many went further than setting examples. High-minded women regularly walked out of social gatherings where prostitutes were present and, in a few towns, picketed saloons to force Sunday closings. But not all their actions were inimical to their menfolk. One diary records that a woman's piano playing in Stockton in 1852 drew "scores of men in the street as far as the eye could see, and some were sobbing."

To the modern reader, the virtuous western wife may sound narrow-minded, prudish and even masochistic. Why travel to a new, unsettled territory only to take up old, limiting roles? Yet these were spirited, if selfless women, the predecessors of more familiar types: the turn-of-the-century settlement house worker who brought "womanly" virtues to the slums, and even the 1950s mom who devoted herself to husband, kids and the PTA. Of course selfless reformers or dedicated homemakers are not the kind of models that will inspire today's career women. But, with a few exceptions, they are all we have. Writers like Jeffrey remind us that women's history must be more than a parade of iconoclasts—Lucy Stones and Lucretia Motts. The example of the silent sufferer, the schoolmarm, the Sunday school moralist, is much closer to most of us, even when we look back at her with a mixture of pride, amusement and embarrassment.

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John Mack Faragher puts the records of the overland emigrants to quite a different use. Where Jeffrey takes the cross-country journey as an exceptional phase in the lives of American women—one segment in the evolution from mid-western housewife to western civilizer—Faragher claims that "the trail experience was no more remarkable than ordinary family life and struggle. . . . [What] was so unusual [was] that many husbands and wives took to writing about it." Faragher looks at these documents for evidence of the structure of family life back home. His title *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* is in the end misleading; more apt is the title he used for the PhD thesis this book evolved from, "Mid-western Families in Motion."

Within this framework, Faragher gives us a much bleaker picture of woman's role than Jeffrey. Because his is a truncated version of the westward movement, Faragher sees none of the "civilizing mission" that propelled Jeffrey's do-gooders. Rather, Faragher's reconstruction rests on his notion that "men enjoyed a monopoly on public life." This social privilege gave men the "upper hand" in marriage as well, and Faragher uncovers "a struggle between men and women that includes the continuing subordination of wives, women's social and emotional battle against that subordination, and the alternatives of accommodation or resistance to patriarchy." Faragher goes so far as to compare the "role set of husband-wife" to that of master-slave.

Faragher's, then, is a sad tale of women confined to their kitchens with enormous workloads, little opportunity for socializing, and none for public service. Men's work in the fields was heavy and tiresome too, but it ended in the evening and could be put aside for a day on weekends for "going to town"—trading, politicking and carousing with the boys.

Faragher views the increased chores and responsibilities Jeffrey cites as woman's lot on the trail as simply more evidence of the long-established male assumption that women should conform to the will of their men. The principle of accommodation to male authority was insidious, determining not just the division of labor and political privilege, but the balance of power between husband and wife. One pioneer diarist recounted bitterly the day she found gold dust in the stream where she was washing out her laundry: "I gathered my apron full of the shining specks and carried it to Mr. Hexox [nearly all female diarists referred to their husbands formally], saying I thought it was gold. He laughed at me and seemed to consider it a good joke." Frustrated, she threw it away, but two years later gold was discovered in the same area. Faragher comments, "The gold awaited discovery by men, for women were not permitted to play that role."

For men, on the other hand, "the trip was a continuation . . . of their social lives at home," Faragher writes. While their wives cooked and washed in the evenings, men gathered for card games, fist fights and storytelling. The journey itself was symbolic, much more than a welcome relief from drudgery in the fields: "Overland emigration struck romantic chords deep within the male breast." It offered the chance to measure "masculine identity against the standard of earlier, heroic generations." Hunting became the symbol both of this fantasized male heroism and of good times with the boys. Disgusted wives recorded day-long hunting expeditions that stalled the movement west and rarely brought in game. Amused bystanders in midwestern outposts joked about emigrant men with "rifles on their shoulders . . . looking as if they were already watching around the corners of the streets for game." If life on the trail was any different from life back home, argues Faragher, it was only in its sometimes ludicrous exaggeration of the rule of male advantage and female subordination.

Of course Jeffrey's and Faragher's views are not altogether inconsistent. The oppressed women Faragher finds on the midwestern homestead may well have matured into Jeffrey's vigorous do-gooders. And in any combination, the two books make a strong case for affirmative action, for it was clearly the basic segregation in everyday work life that gave men such far-reaching authority over women. Even something as basic as the move west to farm, mine or trade was without exception a man's decision. Many a diarist recounted the sad day when her husband came home to announce he'd sold their farm and planned to move west in the spring—without a word of warning.

But perhaps most interesting is what *Frontier Women* and *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* tell us about the latest trends in historiography: demographic studies and first-hand accounts do little to ensure objectivity. John Faragher, possibly a man with a guilty conscience, has managed to turn this most formative chapter of American history into a dismal story that will shame men and dishearten women. By contrast, Julie Jeffrey, whatever her reasons, gives a spirited account that permits women, at least, an example to look back on. Which version are we to believe?

Readers willing to overlook such evident bias will find both books thorough and informative. Faragher's, unfortunately, is burdened with the stodgy structure and encyclopedic detail of a made-over thesis, his several valuable insights saved for brief concluding chapters. Jeffrey, a gifted storyteller, manages to bring her prudish pioneers to life. But ironically, these two very modern works testify most of all to the accuracy of Turner's 1893 remarks, for even as they challenge his notion of the frontier as liberator, they bear out his prophecy of the old frontier's ability continually to shape and be reshaped by the American imagination.

Megan Marshall

Megan Marshall is a freelance writer living in Boston.

Sophie's Choice by William Styron

(Random House; $12.95)

There is a good fictional idea at the bottom of *Sophie's Choice*, and I suspect that those critics who have praised the novel have responded more to this idea—to, that is, the possibility of the novel—than to the experience of reading these sluggish and self-indulgent pages.

The idea: take a young southern

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writer, plainly William Styron in 1947, a few years before his first big success with *Lie Down in Darkness*, and put him in a Brooklyn rooming house where he becomes involved in the passionate but doomed affair between Nathan Landau, a brilliantly neurotic young Jewish biologist, and Sophie Zawistowska, a beautiful, tormented survivor of Auschwitz. Next, give the southerner a romantic sensibility and set him to musing on the mysteries of love and evil; at first baffled by the glimpses Sophie offers him of her 20 months in hell, he soon finds native grounds for the evil in the slave-holding past of his region and family. It remains only to show Nathan turning viciously against Sophie to complete this parable of the universality of evil. You find it everywhere: in Auschwitz, in the abomination of slavery, in carnal love turning to hate, in the oppressed Jew becoming an oppressor, even in the heart of the young Styron, who, so he confesses, once went on a high school joy ride leaving his cancer-weakened mother in a fireless winter room: a dereliction which may have hastened her death and which still haunts the dreams of her son.

One more thing: to keep the critics happy add a dash of literary allusion. "Call me Stingo," the Ishmael-like narrator introduces himself, reminding us of *Moby Dick*; and you can make a case—I certainly won't—that the sex scenes in *Sophie's Choice*, of which there are a great many, work in much the same way as the whaling chapters in that celebrated fish story: grounding the allegorical energy of the book in fleshy materiality.

As I say, it's a good fictional idea, and as a commercial proposition it's dynamite. The Holocaust is lucratively "in"; and sex, especially sex in the head, never goes out of style. Put them together, and throw in lots of 1947 to appeal to the middle-aging nostalgia buffs, and you've got a blockbuster. The proof is in the profits. The paperback rights of *Sophie's Choice* have already sold for $1,000,000, the movie rights for $650,000 and the Book-of-the-Month Club must have paid a comparable sum to offer this blook—a coinage: book plus blockbuster—as their July selection.

They've been had. *Sophie's Choice* is a palimpsest of self-canceling intentions, turgid presentments and mechanical ideas. It is dull. It is portentous. Worst of all, it is written in an unvaryingly mannered style—High Southern—that draws constant spell-destroying attention to itself. (It is the kind of novel in which houses are "abodes," when they are not "habitations.") Sometimes this style works for comic effects, and sometimes, notably in the letters of Stingo's father, a Virginian gentleman, it is even moving: an instrument of baroque dignity that seems to embody everything our Yankee civilization has forfeited in its frenetic pursuit of progress. But for the most part the style of *Sophie's Choice* results in sentences that stopped this forebearing reader in his tracks. Sentences like this:

> *The Commandant was a homebody, as we shall observe, but one dedicated to duty and a cause; thus he became a mere servomechanism in which a moral vacuum had been so successfully sucked clean of every molecule of real qualm or scruple that his own descriptions of the unutterable crimes he perpetrated daily seemed often to float outside and apart from evil, phantasms of cretinous innocence.*

Ignore the length of the thing and never mind the echo of Faulkner. Notice the padding. "Vacuum" means "sucked clean of every molecule"; and "moral" means "scruple or qualm." Why the extra words? My guess is that the critics are at least partly responsible; they have praised Styron's style so unreservedly—John Gardner: "Styron is, of course, a master stylist"—that his editors haven't the nerve to curb its excesses. And given the fickleness with which authors leave their publishers these days, no doubt the editors were also afraid that any exertions on their part would make their genius take his prolixities "down the street"—publishing parlance for another firm. (This, parenthetically, is a sordid fact of life in the publishing industry, and in big and small ways it affects the quality of every book published today, especially the books of major authors like William Styron.)

But wordy and windy as it is, the prose of *Sophie's Choice* is not the chief source of the novel's tediousness. That distinction belongs to its rambling structure. Mr. Styron keeps us jumping from Stingo's masturbatory raptures (he has one pressing preoccupation: to have sex before his balls burst in frustration) to Sophie's tales of life and death at Auschwitz; keeps us shuttling back and forth in this way for over 500 viscous pages until all drama and mystery and even interest have been defeated. The rambling is largely Sophie's fault, for Styron has made her insufferably coy. We get her story through Stingo, but since she never tells him the whole truth at any one sitting, we are forever being dragged back over too familiar ground while she amends the obliquities in her past accounts. It gets so that when she says, "Stingo, I lied to you," we wince. We know we are in for pages of elaboration about Poland and her anti-Semitic father and Auschwitz; pages and pages of this until we are almost happy to get back to Stingo and his dewy dreams.

From Auschwitz to his "engorged," "enpurpled," "swollen" "member"—when it isn't a "staff": it's a singularly tasteless and trivializing juxtaposition. Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, however, thinks it is a coup of fictional art:

> *It appears that Styron has reasoned: If art tends to trivialize the Holocaust, I might as well use that tendency for my advantage and let the reader glimpse the horror through a distorting mirror.*

That is apology, not criticism. But suppose Lehmann-Haupt is right; how much horror does the distorting mirror reflect?

Very little. The horror is buried by mountains of detail. Styron tells us how long the train carrying Sophie from Warsaw takes to get to Auschwitz; tells us what Sophie sees when she wakes up at Auschwitz; what she smells—breakfast, not burning Jews; what the weather is. He describes the view through several windows as she mounts the stairs to her job as the secretary to the camp commandant; tells how she lost her teeth, how she gained a second set, and by what herculean efforts Nathan procured for her yet a third. He *tells* us so much that when he says, "All my life I have retained a streak of uncontrolled didacticism," it sounds like a plea for critical mercy from a writer who, as we have every weary reason to know, lacks the dramatic gift.

Second, the horror of the Holocaust is travestied by such touches as this: on

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her way to seduce the commandant—her only hope of saving her son, also in Auschwitz—Sophie is raped by his maid. That's right, raped by his maid. Styron has added a little lesbian lechery to keep the folks reading and to fool reviewers like John Gardner into drawing preposterous parallels between the decadent Old South and decadent Old Europe.

Third, the horror is undermined by the pages of understanding Styron lavishes on the Nazis. He muses in a theological vein for paragraphs, for example, about the soul of an SS doctor who forced Sophie, upon her arrival at Auschwitz, to choose which of her two children would live and which would go right into the flames. Why did the doctor do this? Well, Styron explains, evil had got to be pretty banal there at Auschwitz and the doctor felt that he had to something really base, something that felt like sin, before he repented. Yes, repented. For this Nazi was basically a religious man hungering for salvation in the jaws of hell. We are not to condemn him too facilely; Styron wants us to understand him, which is why critics have called his novel courageous. I call it purblind. His hand-wringing over the soul of this Nazi strikes me as the gushing of a promiscuous conscience; a gesture at complication, it results only in moral tepidity.

I have said that *Sophie's Choice* is littered with balked intentions and mechanical ideas, and Sophie and Nathan provide the best examples of what I mean. Sophie first. Styron has made her a Polish Catholic (sent to Auschwitz for smuggling a ham) instead of a Jew. So far as I can see, he makes no more of her Catholicism; it has no bearing on her motivation or fate. It's just stuck on—a mind-numbingly mechanical symbol of the fact that the Jews weren't the only people to suffer in the Holocaust. As for Nathan, he is supposed to show us a victim—"As a Jew I am an authority on suffering"—becoming an oppressor. But Nathan is insane, that's the big surprise about him. So he is not a Jew turned murderer, he is a madman doing what madmen do to their lovers. "If he doesn't contribute much to the novel's meaning," Lehmann-Haupt says lamely, "then at least he doesn't get in the way." In fact I liked him; he gives Styron some of his funniest pages. But it's true he doesn't contribute much to the novel's meaning because Styron has fudged his character by making his murderous motivation insanity, and drug-induced insanity at that, rather than rage at Sophie for having survived Auschwitz while millions of his fellow Jews died.

So, Nathan is fudged and Sophie is lost in the mists of melodrama. As for the Holocaust, it is presented through bits borrowed from Lina Wertmuller and Tennessee Williams and ideas borrowed from Hannah Arendt, Bruno Bettleheim and George Steiner. As Mr. Lehmann-Haupt says, "When all is said and done, William Styron's autobiographical novel, *Sophie's Choice,* is a stunning achievement." Dear reader, save yourself a stunning.

Jack Beatty

Coming:
Steven Marcus
on Dickens.

Brief Review

Of Wolves and Men
by Barry Holstun Lopez

(Scribner's; $14.95)

There is an interesting historical progression in the practice of nature-writing in America. In an earlier era, the naturalist was a wondering observer, often a rather crude explorer turned into a chronicler of nature through sheer amazement at an exotic ecosystem. The limits of the naturalist's ability to escape cultural assumptions in observing nature were strictly inherent and unexamined. One thinks of the more thoughtful 19th-century explorers, mixing fustian and shrewd observation in notebooks kept beside campfires. The tradition of the naturalist as untutored observer of nature was all but eclipsed by the claims of hard science, although Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*—in which the author subordinates her sophistication to her sense of wonder—marks an interesting revival.

More recently, writing abut nature has been grouped on the shelves under the rubric, "Ecology." A certain genre has developed in which the author is painfully aware of human limits, tending to regard human presence—including his or her own—as an intrusion, and attempting to experience nature outside those cultural assumptions. One thinks of Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire,* in which the author's exquisite appreciation of the beautiful but alien desert is played off against his curmudgeonly polemics against man as a sort of perpetual tourist in nature.

In recent years there has been a new progression. I see evidence of it in a number of recent books, most strikingly in an interesting piece of work by a long-time professional at nature-writing, Barry Lopez. Lopez has built a solid but unspectacular reputation as a craftsmanlike magazine freelancer, specializing in wildlife and environmental subjects, and as a writer of attenuated prose-poetry (*Desert Notes*). With *Of Wolves and Men,* he makes a significant progression of his own, and proves a first-rate master in a new school of naturalist's lore.

In this well-documented (for the most part), smoothly-written volume, Lopez pursues the image of the wolf in biology, tribal lore, history and mythology. He is always clear that the subject of the book and the object of his quest is just that—the wolf's image. *Of Wolves and Men* is about the human mind as revealed in and reflected by its image of wolves, symbols of twilight, wilderness, warrior, hunter, beast within, Devil incarnate.

That is the stamp of the new naturalism—a search for the human as mirrored in nature. "We create wolves," Lopez writes. "The methodology of science creates a wolf just as surely as does the metaphysical vision of a native American, or the enmity of a cattle baron of the nineteenth century." This is not the naturalist's version of the wolf (under the old school of nature-writing), nor is it meant to be. *Of Wolves and Men* is a highly personal work, colored by the kinds of information Lopez selects and the often oblique anecdotes he chooses to tell. Running through the book is an understandable and perhaps necessary contradiction, as Lopez argues at times for an objective, non-humanizing view of the wolf, and at times engages in highly personal interpretation. For the most part, though, he remains firmly focused on the causes and consequences of humanity's preoccupation with the wolf's image.

Lopez's work has a distinctly political dimension. He writes with controlled anger (one might say too self-consciously controlled anger) of humanity's destruction of the wolf in

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the course of extirpating all that it symbolizes. But his concern, for all the naturalist's and historian's detail, is clearly for the psychic imbalance in humans that leads to such depredations (which continue in the western states aimed at that wolf-surrogate, the coyote).

There are times when Lopez seems to want to do too much with his sources, to claim an observational base for personal vision on sketchy data. There are times when the narrative tone assumes an omniscience that rings hollow for an author who has spent only a few years studying wolves. There are times when Lopez lectures, even while making a show of not lecturing. But these criticisms are not important beside Lopez's energizing achievement of showing how human nature is reflected in nature.

Phillip Johnson

Phillip Johnson is a freelance writer.

Correspondence, *from page 3*

sensical" to argue that Soviet citizens suffer from a housing crisis, food shortages and scarcities of basic consumer goods while the Soviet military demands are met practically without question? In terms of living standards Russia feels like an underdeveloped country, but militarily she is a world power.

Finally, Professor Cohen questions my quotation from Medvedev that "Americans are fools." Does he have a better translation for *duraki*?

Robert Herr

Correction

There was a typographical error in last week's letter from Senator Kennedy about his bill to limit conglomerate mergers. Kennedy wrote, "Bigness is not per se bad." The published version read, "Business is not per se bad." We regret the error.

The New Republic Classified

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THE NEW REPUBLIC MAGAZINE

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My nation," a Palestinian Arab intellectual of my acquaintance told me in Ramallah not long ago, "is better known abroad than it is at home." This is his explanation of why the Palestinians win many empty victories in foreign forums and just about none on their own turf. "If we were really resolved on statehood, rather than bonded to clan and locality, and above all to rhetoric, we would seize Menahem Begin's autonomy scheme and give Palestinian nationalism some meaning beyond hatred of Zionism." He is right. As long as the indigenous Palestinian Arab leadership defers to the ragtag liberation groups in Beirut and to their various patrons everywhere else in declining to join in the negotiations, the real interests of West Bank residents are bound to be ignored. It may be that some collective inner voice warns them of the awful intra-Arab bloodletting that might come if the Israelis gave up the internal policing responsibility. The Palestinian nation, in fact, is not yet; certainly it is not yet one. Most of Palestine and most of the Palestinians are in Jordan, under a foreign flag and an alien royal house. Those in the West Bank who are Christians are in the end Palestinians by sufferance only, suspect in Islam as are all whose worship is different. The Gazans surely are not Egyptians, but their immediate future unavoidably is, just as their immediate past was. The Palestinians define themselves only *vis à vis* Israel. An enraged negative identity does not make a nation.

Some years back I had met Sheikh Hashani Huzander, the aging imam of Gaza. A traditionalist, he was not what you would call a moderate. He's not anything any longer; he's dead, stabbed in the night by an agent of one of the PLO rumps that specialize in murdering civilians. Ordinarily any civilian will do; the record is not marred by too many finicky distinctions. But Huzander was specially chosen because he thought Begin's plan, however grudging, presented the Arabs of Palestine with an opportunity for, and test of, political maturity. That's not very enticing, however, for those who dream of maps without Israel. The dagger is still the arbiter of Palestinian politics; stealthily placed, it forms the decisive majority of one in the parliament of Arab life.

I am among the 60 American Jews—Saul Bellow, Irving Howe, Leonard Bernstein, Alfred Kazin, Jerome Wiesner, Michael Walzer, Walter Laqueur, Erich Segal, Edgar Bronfman, Marie Syrkin, Henry Rosovsky were others—who sent an open letter last week to Prime Minister Begin, criticizing his government's settlements policy. We think these settlements impede the peace process, though we don't pretend that without them the Arabs would be stampeding to negotiate. Most of us believe, moreover, that Begin's vision of autonomy isn't adequate. But give Begin his due: the autonomy he envisions for Palestine's Arabs is more generous than that contemplated by Spain for the Basques, or by Canada for the Québecois. This is to say nothing of how generous it is when compared to the autonomy of the various "autonomous" Soviet republics ostensibly representative of the USSR's ethnic and national minorities. These are all ancient peoples, unlike the Palestinians who emerged only yesterday in the shadow of the Jewish renaissance. The most telling contrast is to the prospects for autonomy of peoples that live among the Arabs. The Kurds, for example, whose national claims of cohesiveness, continuity and culture have provoked responses just this side of genocide. The cruel war waged against them by the Iraqi army gets support from Iraq's non-Arab but militantly Moslem neighbor and enemy, Iran.

What moved me to these ruminations on nationhood is an extraordinary book of *Modern Yugoslav Satire*, edited by Branko Mikasinovich (Cross-Cultural Communications; $12). I've known a few Yugoslavs, each of them doghouse denizens, and not one of them broken to the official cant. Satire was their defense and offense, cynical but humane—first against Stalinism, then against the Titoist deviation itself. Yugoslavia is composed of several nations, which makes the Yugoslav nation a very iffy thing. And it's iffier still because the Yugoslav nation lives in the shadow of Soviet power. So the Yugoslavs worry a lot about nations. Herewith: "Is there a small nation without a heroic past? Can two nations give birth to a third? Is there enough freedom for all nations? Can one die a natural death for one's nation? Are there retired nations? Does a nation last longer if kept in a cool, dry place? Is the glory of one nation the tragedy of another? Is there a nation that isn't always in the right?" And then another: *Is our nation better known abroad than it is at home*? The same sentiment put to me by the Ramallah intellectual, demonstrating that the wisdom of skeptics is universal.

Back in the old peace movement days, Sam Brown and I visited Madame Binh at the National Liberation Front compound in suburban Paris. She told us that after peace came to Vietnam the southern part of the country would still lead an independent (or maybe she said semi-independent) existence. No, she insisted, she wasn't positing a distinct nation in the South or denying for a moment the aim of Vietnamese reunion. It was simply that the South was different, had become different, in ways that made it desirable for the two halves to retain their identities. Perhaps mistakenly, we believed she was sincere, but we suspected she was likely to be disappointed. Peace in Vietnam, we already felt then, might result in agonies not much less than those of war. As it happened, Hanoi gobbled up the South and with it the NLF. Probably by the time Brown and I saw Binh, the NLF's foreign minister so-called, the NLF itself didn't exist except as propaganda.

Not content with having unceremoniously absorbed the South, the power of the Vietnamese nation spilled over into Cambodia, itself an ancient nation. The sense of nationhood is said to be fraternal, though we've had enough fratricide in our time to doubt that. But nothing has prepared us for just how fratricidal the Cambodian nation has been. We understand genocide to mean attempted destruction of one people by another: the Jews by the Germans, the Armenians by the Turks. . . . Cambodia has pushed our imagination of evil just one step further, to the murder of one people by itself. The Vietnamese remain at a more primitive stage of hatred, focusing it all on the ethnic Chinese. Mass deportation of populations is not a modern innovation. But its contemporary practitioners have brought some new ingenuity to the crime. The Vietnamese are extracting the equivalent of $3000 from each Chinese they allow out of the country. This buys a 50-50 chance of survival on the high seas. From the fact that so many thousands choose to take that risk, you can guess what life in Vietnam's "new economic zones" must be like.

M.P.

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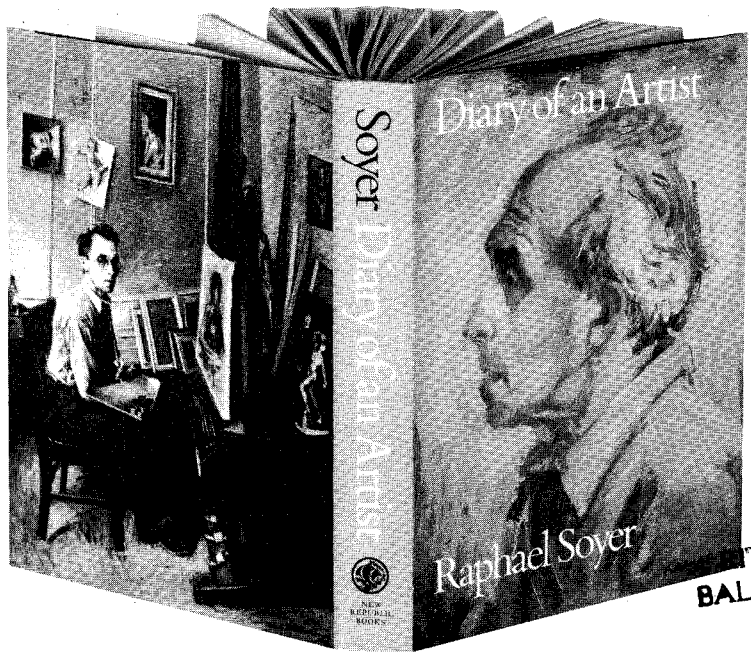

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